

JULY/AUGUST 2025

ANIMATION MAG



**BUCKLE UP FOR PARAMOUNT'S
SMURFADELIC SUMMER RIDE**

\$7.95 U.S.

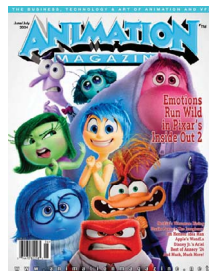
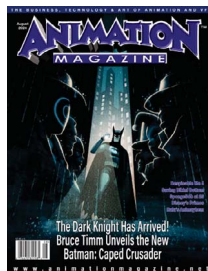
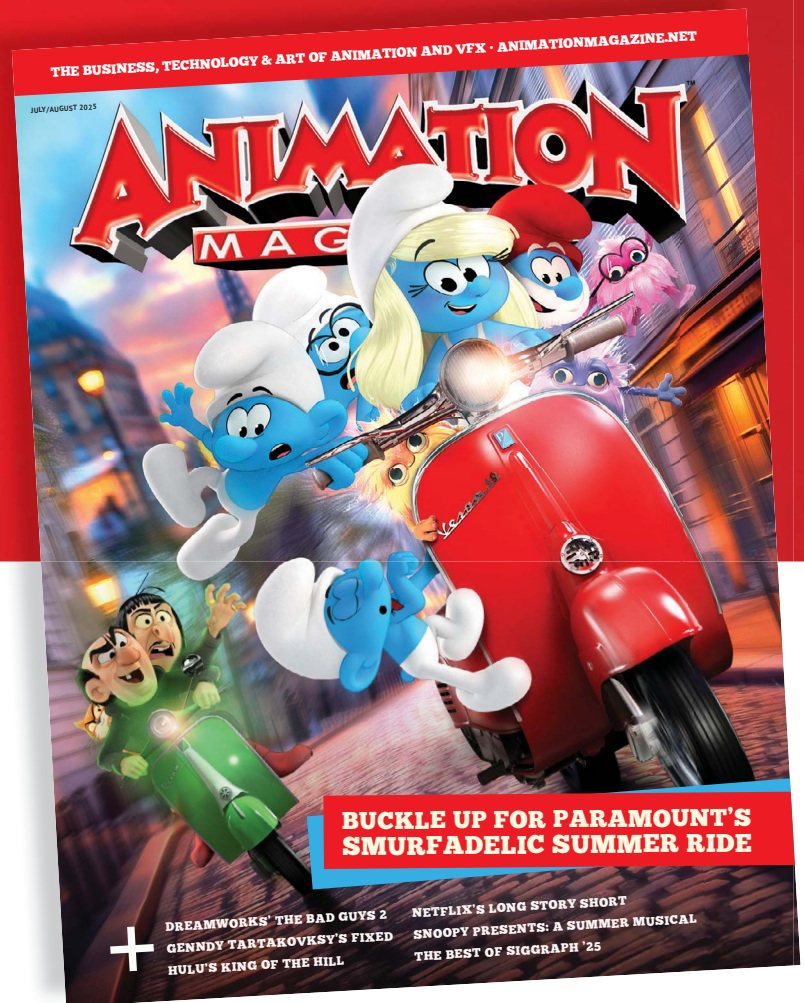


DREAMWORKS' THE BAD GUYS 2
GENNDY TARTAKOVSKY'S FIXED
HULU'S KING OF THE HILL

NETFLIX'S LONG STORY SHORT
SNOOPY PRESENTS: A SUMMER MUSICAL
THE BEST OF SIGGRAPH '25



**WHICH ONE
DID YOU MISS?
VISIT OUR PAST
ARCHIVES AND
ORDER YOUR COPIES.**



ANIMATION HIGHLIGHTS AT YOUR COMMAND!

animationmagazine.shop/collections/all-products

Subscribe: animationmagazine.net/subscribe-now

JULY/AUGUST 2025

ANIMATIONTM MAGAZINE

DREAMWORKS'
THE BAD GUYS 2

SO MUCH FUN, IT'S
CRIMINAL!

PARAMOUNT'S
SMURFS

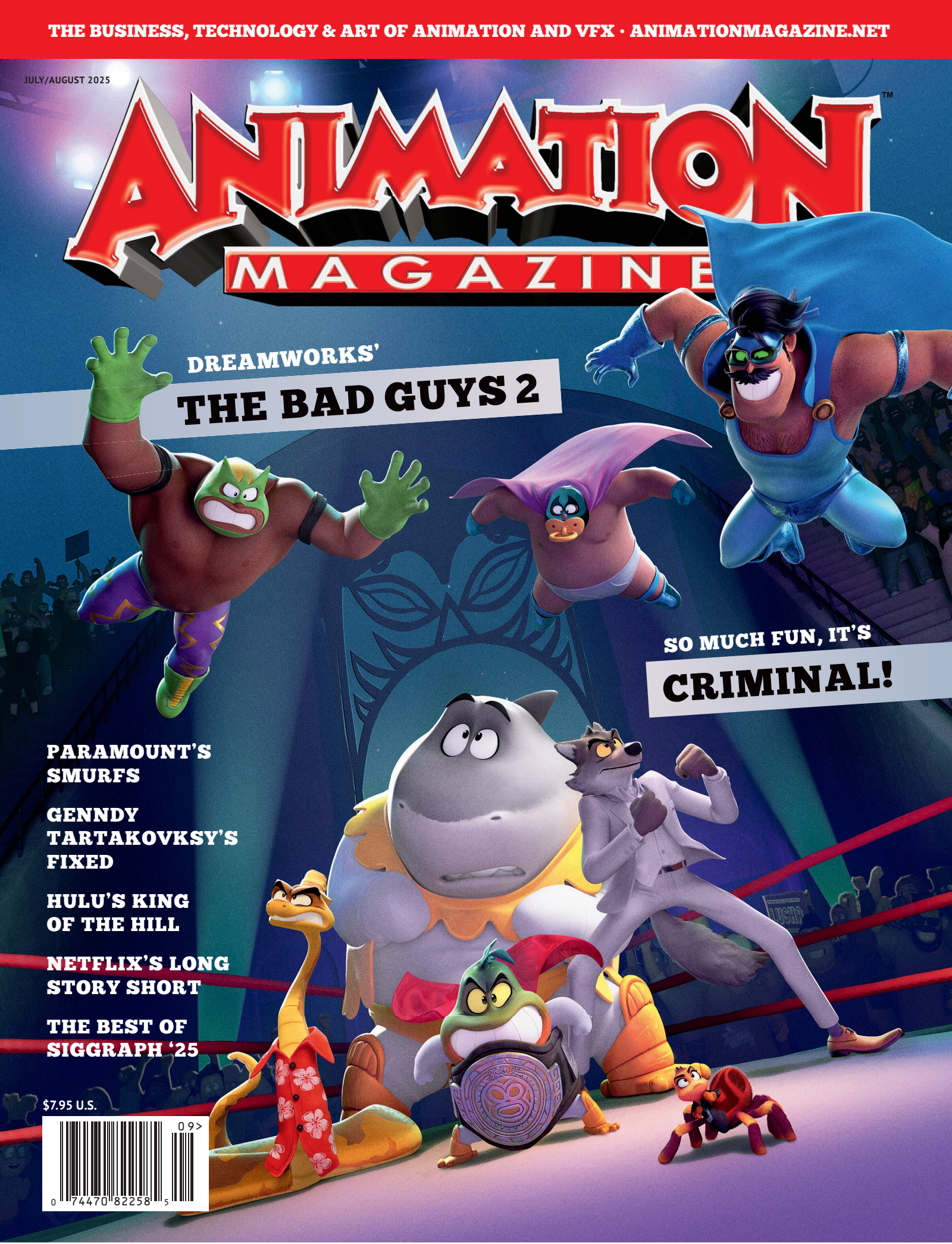
GENNDY
TARTAKOVSKY'S
FIXED

HULU'S KING
OF THE HILL

NETFLIX'S LONG
STORY SHORT

THE BEST OF
SIGGRAPH '25

\$7.95 U.S.





MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE NEXT BIG ANIMATION EVENT IN L.A.!

NOVEMBER 17-19, 2025



**THE
GARLAND
HOTEL
NORTH
HOLLYWOOD
CALIFORNIA**

**WHERE
THE BEST
IN THE
BUSINESS
MEET!**





The World **ANIMATION** *Summit*

REGISTER NOW AND SAVE!
animationmagazine.net/summit



ANIMATION MAGAZINE



JULY/AUGUST 2025
VOLUME 39, ISSUE 6, NUMBER 351



Smurfs



The Bad Guys 2



Fixed

FRAME-BY-FRAME

- 6 Animation Planner
- 8 The Must-Have List

FEATURES

10 B-B-B-B Bad to the Bone
DreamWorks' super fun animal thieves up the ante in *The Bad Guys 2*.

14 Smurfy with a Chance of Gargamel
Director Chris Miller and production designer Max Boas share the secrets of Paramount's new *Smurfs* movie.

14 Fixed, Filth & the Joy of Hand-Drawn Animation
Director Genndy Tartakovsky breaks down the Sony/Netflix movie's long road to the screen.

TV/STREAMING

22 The Dang Ol' Gang Is Back
Mike Judge, Greg Daniels and Saladin K. Patterson spill the beans on this summer's eagerly anticipated *King of the Hill* revival on Hulu.

26 The Triumphant Return of Gumball Watterson
Ben Bocquelet's inventive cartoon makes a much-anticipated comeback in *The Wonderfully Weird World of Gumball*.

29 The Family Ties That Bind
Acclaimed artist and animation veteran Lisa Hanawalt gives us the scoop on her new Netflix project, *Long Story Short*.

32 Simpatico Siblings
The creators of *Wylde Pak* take us behind the scenes of their high-energy Nickelodeon show.

34 Songs in the Key of Peanuts
Apple TV+'s memorable special *Snoopy Presents: A Summer Musical* delivers a timeless lesson and five catchy tunes by Ben Folds.

EVENTS

38 A Peek Inside the Crystal Ball
This year's SIGGRAPH in Vancouver offers a look back at the 30th anniversary of *Toy Story* and a glance forward to the medium's future possibilities.

SHORTS

41 Vermin Point of View
All about SIGGRAPH 2025's Best of Show winner, *Trash*, directed by graduates from France's acclaimed ESMA school.

42 Love Is in the Air
The directors of the prize-winning short *Jour de Vent* discuss their whimsical 2D short.

VFX/TECH

43 On the Digital Fast Track
Visual effects supervisor Ryan Tudhope takes us behind the scenes of summer's racing blockbuster *F1: The Movie*.

45 Tech Reviews
DaVinci Resolve 20, Maya MotionMaker

CLOSING SHOT

48 A Day in the Life
We visit Joshua Moshier, the talented composer of the popular feature, *The Day the Earth Blew Up: A Looney Tunes Movie*.



King of the Hill and Other Toons Live at Comic-Con

Disney TV and Hulu will make a big splash at Comic-Con at downtown San Diego beginning Thursday July 24. Fans can check out the *King of the Hill* experience and step into the Hill family's backyard for a big ole cookout, complete with BBQ bites served up throughout the day, classic lawn games, themed photo ops and a cold can of Alamo (water) to beat the heat. Hulu will be cooking up custom merch and exclusive prizes, bringing the beloved show to life right next

to the Convention Center in the Bayfront's Parking Lot A. Don't miss the life-sized *Phineas and Ferb* Whack-a-Pest game adjacent to the Omni hotel.

Indigo Room Panels include *Phineas and Ferb* on Friday, July 24 at 11 a.m., *Solar Opposites* at 3 p.m., *King of the Hill* at 4 p.m., *Bob's Burgers* on Saturday at 10 a.m., *Futurama* at 11 a.m., *The Simpsons* at 11:45, *American Dad!* at 12:45, and *Family Guy* at 1:30 p.m. Visit comic-con.org for the latest schedule.

Editorial Cover A: Directed by Chris Miller, Paramount's *Smurfs* arrives in theaters on July 12.

Editorial Cover B: The master criminals return for their second big-screen adventure in DreamWorks' *The Bad Guys 2* on August 1.

Comic-Con Cover: *King of the Hill* begins its 14th season on Hulu in August 4.

SIGGRAPH Cover: Ringling College of Art and Design trains the next generation of animation trailblazers. *The Mooning* by Ringling graduate Mason Klesch won the Best Student Prize at SIGGRAPH 2025.

THE HIGHEST-CHARTING SOUNDTRACK OF 2025

"ONE OF THE MOST DAZZLING
SURPRISES OF THE YEAR.

Full of gorgeous animation, layered storytelling,
outstanding voice work and an addictive soundtrack."

NEAREST PICTURE
NBP

"UNMISSABLE.

Gorgeously animated with
top-shelf production."

COLLIDER

"One of the year's most
GLEEFULLY ORIGINAL
cinematic rides."

Film



KPOP DEMON HUNTERS



95%
*AS OF JULY 10



SCAN HERE TO LISTEN
TO THE SOUNDTRACK,
FEATURING THE GLOBAL
PHENOMENON, "GOLDEN"

SONY PICTURES
ANIMATION

PG
PARENTAL STRONG
SUGGESTION
ACTION/VIOLENCE,
SCARY IMAGES,
THEMATIC ELEMENTS,
SOME SUGGESTIVE
MATERIAL, AND
BRIEF LANGUAGE
Some Material May Not Be Suitable for Children

NETFLIX PRESENTS FROM SONY PICTURES ANIMATION "KPOP DEMON HUNTERS"
STORY BY MAGGIE KANG
SCREENPLAY BY DANYA JIMENEZ & HANNAH McMECHAN AND MAGGIE KANG AND CHRIS APPELHANS
PRODUCED BY MICHELLE L.M. WONG DIRECTED BY MAGGIE KANG CHRIS APPELHANS
SOUNDTRACK ON REPUBLIC RECORDS

NETFLIX



Dog Days of Summer Forever!



When we were kids, time used to come to a slow stop during the summer season. The days were so long that we'd often run out of things to do or ways to annoy our parents. These days, it seems that even in July, time

waits for no one. One day we are celebrating the arrival of Memorial Weekend, and then next, the dreary back-to-school sales signs are warning that fall will be arriving without much notice. Thank God, at least, the season's animated movies arrive at regular frequency to help us keep time.

In this issue, we celebrate the release of two fun (and very different) studio animated features that should give families good reasons to plan outings. Yes, the ticket and popcorn prices are quite hard to believe, but we all want to support the industry, right? Just think of all the talented people who worked long hours for several years to prepare Paramount's *Smurfs* and DreamWorks' *The Bad Guys* 2. Both of those properties should be familiar to any die-hard toon lover, but it's true that both of these films' creative teams went to great lengths to make sure they're packed with fresh ideas. Let's hear it for top-notch family entertainment, served with some real visual razzle dazzle and many clever jokes.

On the streaming side, the latest animated feature from Genndy Tartakovsky — Sony Pictures Animation's *Fixed* — is rescued from being neutered by the fairy godmothers at Netflix. Veteran journalist Jennifer Wolfe caught up with Genndy and his team to give us a thorough and inspiring

look at the making of this very original R-rated comedy, which will definitely get tails wagging!

This month, we also see the return of Mike Judge and Greg Daniels' beloved Texan family in *King of the Hill* Season 14 on Hulu. The series creators and new showrunner Saladin Patterson were kind enough to take us behind the scenes of the revival of the beloved toon. We also have the return of *BoJack Horseman* creator Raphael Bob-Waksberg and artist Lisa Hanawalt to Netflix with their hilarious, poignant and idiosyncratic new show, *Long Story Short*. On top of all that, Gumball and



Charlie Brown & Snoopy are also dropping by to put a big smile on our faces. Yes, summer will be over before we know it, but at least, there will be a lot of good animation to fill the languid hours.

Ramin

Ramin Zahed
Editor in Chief
ramin@animationmagazine.net

INBETWEENS by: Bob Harper



In his attempt to cover all of the bases, Tim cosplayed as something that not even he could explain

ANIMATION MAGAZINE™

July/August 2025

Vol.39, Issue 6, No.351

info@animationmagazine.net

President & Publisher: Jean Thoren

Accounting: Jan Bayouth

EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief: Ramin Zahed

Multimedia Editor: Mercedes Milligan

Webmaster: Damaso Abrajan

Asst. Webmaster: Lucy Abrajan

Tech Reviews Editor: Todd Sheridan Perry

Copy Editor: Jason Sanchez

Contributors: Ryan Gaur, Trevor Hogg, Tom McLean, Jeff Spry, Jennifer Wolfe, Ellen Wolff

edit@animationmagazine.net

ADVERTISING SALES

Phone: 818-883-2884

Fax: 818-883-3773

Director of Advertising: Sam Selvaggio

sam@animationmagazine.net

EVENTS

Director: Kim Derevlany

kim@animationmagazine.net

CREATIVE

Art Director: Francis Klaess

ACCOUNTING/CIRCULATION

Circulation Director: Jan Bayouth

circ@animationmagazine.net

TO SUBSCRIBE

For the U.S., the rate is \$60 for 1 year or \$95 for 2 years. Rates for Canada and Mexico are US\$75 for 1 year or US\$120 for 2 years delivered by foreign airmail. Foreign rates are US\$90 for 1 year or US\$145 for 2 years delivered by foreign airmail. Please allow six to eight weeks for initial delivery. Also available in a digital version for \$36 for 1 year or \$60 for 2 years. Changes, renewals, cancellations, questions or comments: anics@magserv.com

SUBSCRIPTION CUSTOMER SERVICE

Animation Magazine

PO Box 16225, North Hollywood, CA 91615-6625

(818) 286-3119

anics@magserv.com

ANIMATION MAGAZINE

(USPS 015-877/ISSN 1041-617X)

Published monthly except for combined issues of May/June, July/August and September/October, by *Animation Magazine*, 24943 Kit Carson Road Calabasas, CA 91302. Periodicals postage paid at Woodland Hills Post Office CA, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: send address changes to mailing address: *Animation Magazine*, 26500 W. Agoura Rd. Ste. 102-651 Calabasas, CA 91302

Prior written approval must be obtained to duplicate any and all contents. The copyrights and trademarks of images featured herein are the property of their respective owners. *Animation Magazine* acknowledges the creators and copyright holders of the materials mentioned herein, and does not seek to infringe on those rights.

Animation Magazine ©2025 *Animation Magazine*

TAKE YOUR PLACE AT THE N°1 GLOBAL CONTENT MARKET.

Celebrate today's content + discover tomorrow's.

13th-16th October
Palais des Festivals, Cannes.





Animation Planner: July/August 2025



Snoopy Presents: A Summer Musical



My Neighbor Totoro



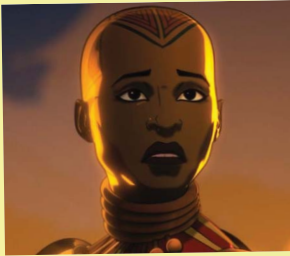
Women Wearing Shoulder pads



South Park



King of the Hill



Eyes of Wakanda



The Bad Guys 2



Fixed



Sketch

LATE JULY

19

Crunchyroll brings more monster mayhem to screens with *Kaiju No. 8* S2.

Studio Ghibli Fest brings the Hayao Miyazaki favorite *My Neighbor Totoro* back to theaters through Fathom Events for five days.

23

Comedy Central heats up Wednesday nights with the S27 premiere of *South Park*, followed by the S2 launch of Andy Samberg's *Digman!*

24

Netflix drops a double dose of super-cuteness with *My Melody & Kuromi* today, while Crunchyroll launches the new yakuza odd couple comedy *Let's Go Karaoke!*

San Diego's *Comic-Con International* returns for another long weekend jam-packed with exclusive panels, screenings, merch and special events! comic-con.org

AUGUST

1

DreamWorks' newly minted Good Guys are pulled back into the animal underworld in *The Bad Guys 2*, in theaters today.

On home screens, families can enjoy more panda wisdom in *Stillwater* S4 on Apple TV+.

4

Mike Judge & Greg Daniels' *King of the Hill* makes its long-awaited comeback on Hulu, catching up with the Arlen gang many years after the events of the original series.

6

Glimpse the history behind the MCU in *Eyes of Wakanda*, the new Black Panther-inspired animated event series on Disney+.

A young girl's scribbly monster drawings come to life in the indie comedy *Sketch*, starring Tony Hale and D'Arcy Carden, in theaters thru Angel Studios.

10

Studio Ghibli Fest continues with two engagements this month: Isao Takahata's *Grave of the Fireflies* (Aug. 10-12) and Miyazaki's *Ponyo* (Aug. 23-27).

The *SIGGRAPH* computer graphics conference & expo heads to Vancouver, BC this year with five days of cutting-edge inspiration. s2025.siggraph.org

13

Genndy Tartakovsky's adult animated comedy feature *Fixed* finally comes out of the dog house on Netflix today!

17

Adult Swim debuts its Spanish-language stop-motion project *Women Wearing Shoulder pads*, set in 1980s Quito and centering on an all-woman cast.

22

Bolack Horseman creator Raphael Bob-Waksberg is back with a new Netflix animated series, *Long Story Short*, out today.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Animotion Film Festival

Florence, Italy

animotionfilmfest.com

Insomnia

Kaluga, Russia

insomniapfest.ru

Supertoona

Šibenik, Croatia

supertoonaestival.com

Countryside Animafest

Salamiou, Cyprus

animafest.com.cy

Animist Tallinn

Tallinn, Estonia

animistfestival.eu

Turku Animated Film Festival

Turku, Finland

taafi.fi

Animae Caribe

Trinidad & Tobago

animaeacaribe.com

To get your company's events and products listed in this monthly calendar, please email edit@animationmagazine.net

mipjunior®

mip

IMAGINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF STORIES.

Connecting creators, inspiring young minds.

11th-12th October
Palais des Festivals, Cannes.

RX In the business of
building businesses



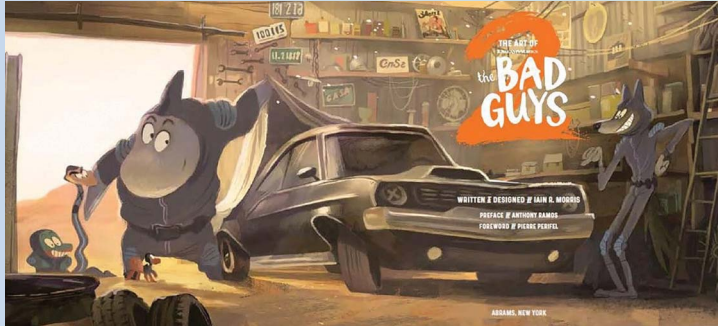
More information
www.mipjunior.com



The Must-Have List

By Mercedes Milligan

BOOKS



The Art of DreamWorks The Bad Guys 2

Grab your balaclava and slink into the off-limits areas of DWA's studio for an exclusive look at the making of the action-packed sequel, which sends the reformed criminal critters on a globe-trotting heist. This hardcover treasury stashes never-before-seen production art, behind-the-scenes details and an exclusive 64-page insert of original beat boards created by director Pierre Perifel and production designer Luc Desmarchelier, plus a preface by voice star Anthony Ramos and foreword by returning helmer Perifel. *Abrams / July 22 / \$50*

Studio Ghibli: Dream Artists

Celebrate 40 years of game-changing animated artistry from one of the world's most esteemed studios. Both a history of Ghibli and an art anthology of its works, this hardcover explores the evolution of the studio's visual style and masterful storytelling over four decades with in-depth looks at *Castle in the Sky*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Spirited Away*, *Ponyo* and more. Fans can also delve into interviews and insights from Hayao Miyazaki, Isao Takahata and others as they revisit their favorite masterpieces. *Insight Editions / July 22 / \$22*

X-Men '97: The Art and Making of the Animated Series

Power up your mutant mastery with this deep dive into the creation of Marvel Animation's Emmy-nominated revival. The 224-page hardcover is packed with storyboards, character sketches, vehicle designs, animatic frames and more featuring the updated, retro-influenced Wolverine, Storm, Jubilee, Beast, Cyclops and the rest of the genetically enhanced gang. *Abrams / \$50*



MERCH

Besht Fwend Foweber

Last month, fans got the sad news that *The Tiny Chef Show* had been taken off the burner by Nickelodeon, but luckily you can still find inspiration for your weshpees with the 7.5" **Phunny Plush** available to pre-order from Kidrobot (\$17, shipping in Q4 '25). You can also support the show by visiting thetinychefshow.com. Let him cook!



DISCS

Dan Da Dan: Season One

Revisit the hit supernatural rom-com with show creators and composer interviews, director's scene breakdown and more. *Shout! / \$25 BD*

Looney Tunes: Collector's Vault Vol. 1

25 cartoons never before seen on DVD or Blu-ray, including shorts by Tex Avery, Chuck Jones and Friz Freleng. *Warner Archive / \$25 BD*

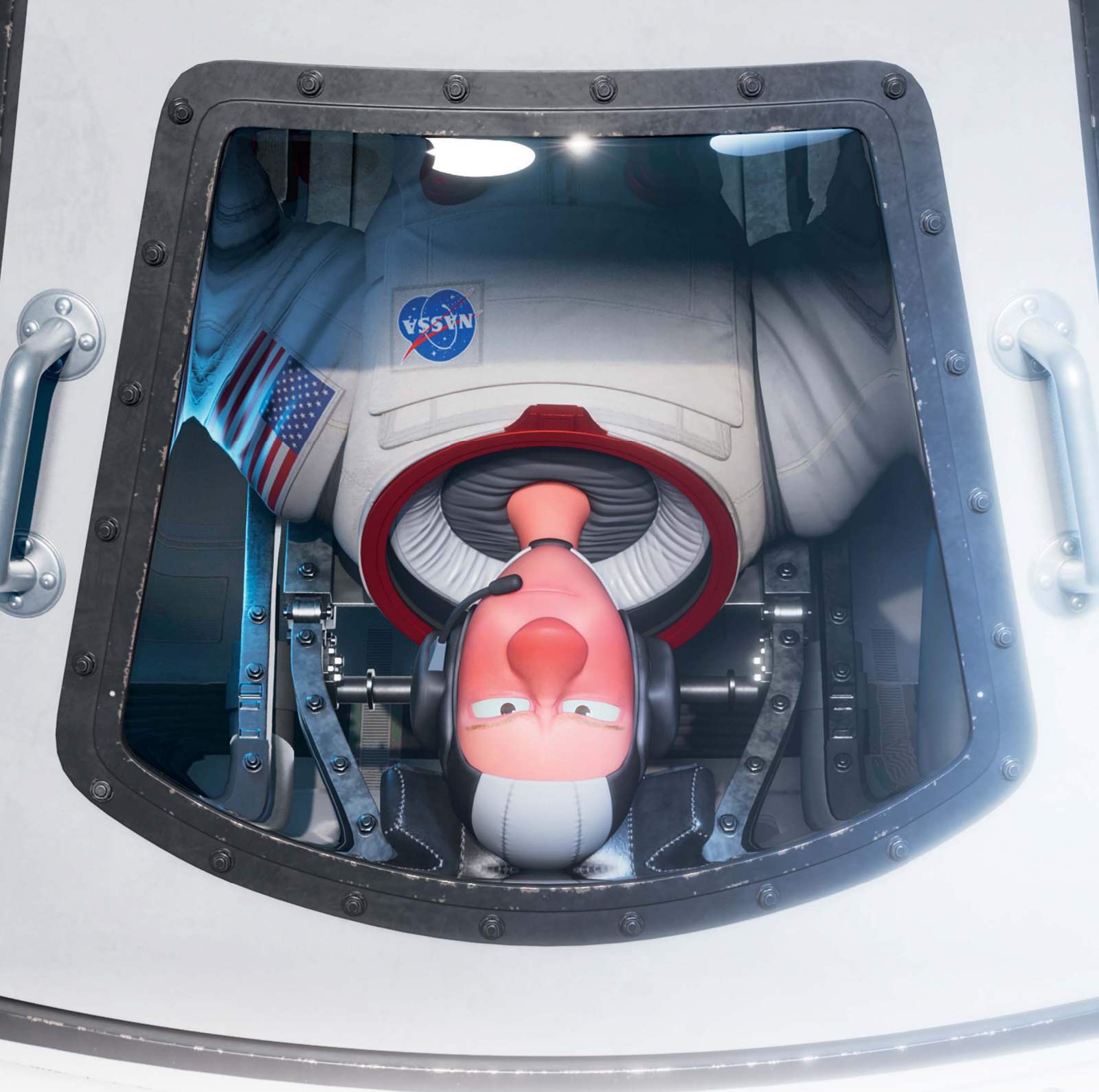
Sonic Prime: The Complete Series Steelbook

SEGA's iconic star traverses parallel worlds on a quest to reconnect his pals in a race against oblivion across three seasons. *NCircle / \$50*

Grave of the Fireflies LE Steelbook

Isao Takahata's stunning, devastating WWII drama gets an HD re-release, bundled with interviews with the director and critic Roger Ebert, full-length storyboards, deleted scene storyboards, image galleries and more. *GKIDS + Shout! Studios / \$27*





17
STUDENT
ACADEMY AWARDS



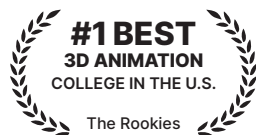
#3 BEST
CREATIVE SCHOOLS
WORLDWIDE

The Rookies



#2 BEST
GAME DESIGN
& DEVELOPMENT
COLLEGE IN THE U.S.

The Rookies



#1 BEST
3D ANIMATION
COLLEGE IN THE U.S.

The Rookies



#1 BEST
MOTION GRAPHICS
COLLEGE
IN THE WORLD

The Rookies



Ringling College
of Art + Design

The Mooning, Mason Klesch '24 and Vivian Osness '24, Computer Animation

Turning passion into profession. www.ringling.edu



Heist Heaven: *The Bad Guys* sequel pays homage to popular action franchises like *Mission: Impossible* and *The Fast and Furious* as well as having fun with real-world mad billionaires like Elon Musk.



FEATURES

B-B-B-B-BAD TO THE BONE



**DREAMWORKS'
SUPER FUN ANIMAL
THIEVES UP
THE ANTE IN
THE BAD GUYS 2.**

By Tom McLean

Turning over a new leaf is tough for anyone, but it's especially difficult for *The Bad Guys*. Having won over audiences with their style, skills and humor in the 2022 original, the crew is back — both on screen and behind the scenes — for *The Bad Guys 2*.

Pierre Perifel returns to direct, with co-director JP Sans coming aboard. Among the voice actors reprising their roles are Sam Rockwell as Mr. Wolf, Marc Maron as Mr. Snake, Craig Robinson as Mr. Shark, Anthony Ramos as Mr. Piranha, Awkwafina as Ms. Tarantula, Zazie Beetz as Diane Foxington, Alex Borstein as Chief Misty Luggins and Richard Ayoade as Professor Rupert Marmalade IV. Joining the cast are Natasha Lyonne as Doom, Maria Bakalova as Pigtail and Danielle Brooks as Kitty Kat. Produced by Damon Ross, *The Bad Guys 2* is due in theaters August 1.

Perifel says his reaction to getting a sequel was a mix of gratitude and terror. "Can I make a movie that's as good as the first one?" he says. "It's like you go through the entire thing, against a giant mountain ... it takes forever, but the most amazing people surround



it. And [it's] just like an excellent, rewarding, fun adventure that we'll go through together. And that's what I love about animation."

Ditching the Nine-to-Five

Two plot points in the sequel were clear from the beginning: The first one was set in place with the final line of the original film, where Diane Foxington declares that the team is ready to get to work. "When we wrote that line, it was like, 'All right, let's go do some action!'" Perifel says. "Let's have fun together as a group, and then when we're thinking about the second [film], it was always like, 'Wait, hang on a minute. What if work is just, like, nine-to-five jobs and it's boring, and they're trying to enter society, and they can't? Nobody wants them, and they're really bad at it?'"

The second plot point came from the Aaron

[the franchise is] a known entity," Perifel says. "We're not the underdog — now, we're the big one coming out." He also wanted to make a bigger movie, which was difficult because the budget was not necessarily bigger this time.



"This movie has been such a fun adventure ... I'm so proud that we managed just to make a sequel that fits in really well with where we left the first one but yet elevates the scope, the look and the size of that the franchise."

DIRECTOR PIERRE PERIFEL

Additional production on *The Bad Guys 2* was tackled by Sony Pictures Imageworks, which handled 20% of the animation. This brought its own challenges, such as ensuring that the final product matched seamlessly with the animation produced in-house using a different

Exposed to the Core

The role gave Sans a macro view of the project, and he and Perifel worked side by side on the movie. "I think he wanted me to go through each stage of creating a movie,"

Sans says. "He wanted to expose me to all these different departments that I haven't been exposed to, but he also wanted me at his side so we could both be on the same page on everything and then push each other and elevate each other and question each other."



Blabey graphic novels the movies are based on. "There is that gag that is the most favorite gag [for] our kids, and that's the fart in space," he says. "And we were like, 'OK how do we get there?' So now we have the starting point, and we had the ending point. How do we bridge all of this stuff?"

The books, from which they borrowed some aspects, also inspired the villains of the piece: Kitty Kat, Doom and Pigtail — a formidable trio looking to take the Bad Guys' place as the world's top villains by pulling off the ultimate heist. "With these three, we had the starting point, we had the ending point and then we had the breakdown in the middle.

"The thing I didn't expect was more pressure from, more scrutiny from, the studio, because



Katherine de Vries

crew and pipeline. "They had to rebuild a lot of things, so that part of it was very challenging, very eye-opening and fun as well, because these teams are so fun to work with," says the director.

The film required about 30 to 35 animators at the studio's Glendale base, with a similar number working on it at Sony, says co-director JP Sans, who has known and collaborated with Perifel for around 15 years, including as co-directors on the 2018 DreamWorks short *Bilby*. "I think that got us a little bit of a groove of how we would work together in a directing role," Sans says. He was the head of animation on *The Bad Guys* before moving up to co-direct the sequel, a practice the studio encourages to develop new directing talent.

The production found that the most efficient way to collaborate was to give Imageworks standalone locations so the team could build its own sets and not have to share those assets across two pipelines. For example, Sony animated a lucha libre wrestling sequence and a wedding scene. "That really helped them almost make a mini movie within the movie."

Making the sequel required fleshing out the characters, which Perifel says was a significant challenge that they overcame by placing them in new environments and situations. Snake, for example, falls in love while Wolf struggles with the humiliations of trying to find a job without losing hope.

Of course, *The Bad Guys 2* is at its core a heist story. The cold open puts its own spin on the cinematic traditions of James Bond, *The Fast and the Furious* and *Mission: Impossible*. The flashback sequence is set in Cairo, as the

Bad Guys infiltrate a supposedly impregnable fortress to escape with a treasure beyond compare — all with a sly silliness of its own. Perifel says the long opening shot parallels the first film while reintroducing each character and giving them a moment to shine.

Continuity was important for the film. Katherine de Vries worked as a story artist on the first *Bad Guys*, which provided a solid foundation in the characters and world, enabling her to take on the head of story role for the sequel. “I didn’t feel like I was lost in the woods too much,” she says. “There was a lot to learn in terms of managerial stuff, but at the very least, I was very familiar with this team, this leadership, Damon [Ross, producer], Pierre and JP and, of course, the world and the characters.

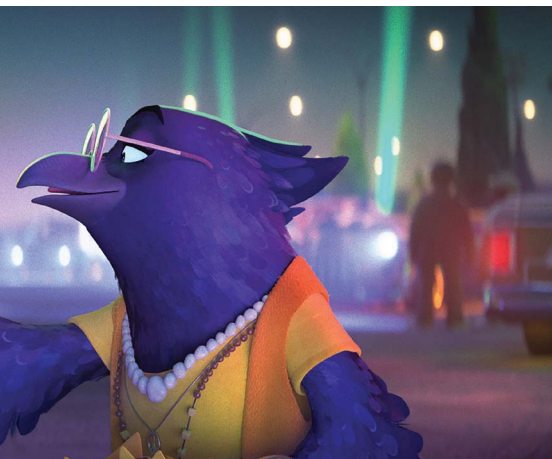
“I come from the world of story, whereas our directors come from the world of animation,

the directors until a final version was reached that satisfied everyone.

The animation style in *The Bad Guys 2* stays pretty much on model. However, there are instances where the rules would be bent, says Ben Willis, head of character animation. In the in-between moments, for example, they would push a character’s pose or expression for just a moment, enough to read the expression. “We would do fun things to the in-betweens that would break the model a little bit more than maybe we had before, just to make sure that the movement itself also felt fun and interesting and entertaining,” Willis says. “We were very selective about the moments in which we push them away from model, and usually it was for dramatic



overboarded those, in some cases, to generate a lot of footage and a lot of ideas, which then we cut down in editorial for time,” de Vries says. “Once it moved out of storyboards into previz and layout, I know there was quite



[so] our skills are sort of complementary,” de Vries says. “I was fortunate to be invited into a lot of the formative story discussions on this movie and discussing the script on a foundational level, and very, very early on in the process, trying to shape the plot into what it ultimately became.”

effect or it was for that impact.”

There were a few moments that went even further, which was one of the ways the animation in the second film evolved from the first. “There were moments where we just allowed ourselves to be a little bit more expressive or go a little bit further

a lot of work done in those departments, with that team, between that team and the directors really going into different possibilities with how to do this camera move, or how to shoot this, or how to cut into a certain detail to make something feel punchier. And so there was a real marriage between the editorial and layout, in that case, to just refine and make it as intense as possible.”

“This movie has been such a fun adventure, both humanly and in terms of what we achieve with it,” Perifel says. “I’m so proud that we managed just to make a sequel that fits in really well with where we left the first one but yet elevates the scope, the look and the size of the franchise. And I think it is such a great transition to potential third one.” ■

“He wanted to expose me to all these different departments that I haven’t been exposed to, but he also wanted me at his side so we could both be on the same page on everything.”

CO-DIRECTOR JP SANS



De Vries also supervised the story team, which consisted of eight to 12 artists who translated the script into storyboards for the first time and iterated on them based on notes, editorial changes and feedback from

with a certain expression or an idea than maybe we did on the first,” says the head of character animation.

Sequences like Wolf’s job hunt required fewer iterations than the action set pieces. “We

Universal releases DreamWorks’ *The Bad Guys 2* in theaters nationwide on August 1.



FEATURES

SMURFY WITH A CHANCE OF GARGAMEL



Director Chris Miller and production designer Max Boas share the secrets of bringing Peyo's little blue creatures to animated life in the new Paramount picture.

By Ramin Zahed

The singing little blue folks are ready for their close-ups — again! Thanks to Paramount's summer feature *Smurfs*, a new generation of audiences will learn to love Belgian comic-book artist Peyo's (born Pierre Culliford) charming characters, which were first introduced in October 1958. The magical creatures, who live in a mushroom village and are only three apples tall, are part of a big musical feature, which showcases the voices of Rihanna (as Smurfette), John Goodman, JP Karliak, Nick Offerman, Sandra Oh, Hannah Waddingham, James Corden, Xolo Maridueña, Octavia Spencer, Dan Levy, Kurt Russell and Marshmello.

Best known to American audiences for the classic Hanna-Barbera series that ran from 1981 to 1989, three features produced by Sony and Nickelodeon's CG series (2021-present), the Smurfs now find themselves embarking on a daring mission into the real world after Papa Smurf (John Goodman) is captured by Gargamel and his brother Razamel (both voiced by JP Karliak).

Back to Peyo's Village

The colorful and imaginative feature is directed by Chris Miller, best known for helming DreamWorks' popular *Shrek the Third* (2007) and its Oscar-nominated spinoff feature, *Puss in Boots* (2011). The animation veteran says he was drawn to the project from the start for several reasons: "I loved the script, and I am a huge fan of the original Hanna-Barbera series," he says during a recent interview with *Animation Magazine*. "Another reason was that Paramount had the idea to go back to the characters' original design and return to the DNA of the comics. My experience with the Smurfs was through the show from the '80s, and so I discovered Peyo's comics. I just loved the incredible designs, the movement on the page. The Sony movies that were [made] about 10 years ago were going for a more realistic feel. So, in the back of my mind, I wanted to see a contemporary version of those classic designs that was volumetric but still honored the original comic-book look."

Miller says the movie takes advantage of the visual contrast between the safe and magical Belgian forest where the Smurfs live and the live-action outside world where they must go to save Papa Smurf. "It's like they've gone to another planet," says the director. "There's a sweetness to their original world that turns into chaos, and the big trick was to make sure





FEATURES

that they could all visually exist in that live-action space, and I think we accomplished that.”

The creative team opted to use different kinds of animation to further expand the world of the little villagers. “We dabbled in various styles,” says Miller. “There’s some dimensional sequences, and we’ll see them as claymated characters and using children’s drawing style. That was fun, strange and weirdly nostalgic, which for us was important to leave a trace of the original work in everything that we were doing or at least tap into a memory that the audience may have, whether they’re 30 or 50!”

The lion’s share of the animation was produced by the teams at Cinesite in Vancouver and Montreal. “They also did the visual effects for the live-action sequences, and it was a



Max Boas

very nice partnership,” says Miller. “We all had to zero in on the right style for the CG animation, but we always referred to Peyo as the ‘blueprint.’ The comics tell you how they move, and the energy, the buoyancy and ‘poppiness,’ everything is there. The trick was to be constantly aware of the simplicity of the design and make sure we were communicating real emotions with those Smurf eyes and mouths.”

The movie also features a two-minute claymated sequence that was delivered by L.A. indie shop Screen Novelties — best known for crafting charming sequences for shows such as *SpongeBob SquarePants* and *The Patrick Star Show*. “I love that place,” says Miller. “They used stop-motion Gumby-style backgrounds, the characters were about eight inches high. It was just great to walk into this

great studio, and it ended up being a really funny, fast-paced sequence, about a minute or two minutes long, but that’s where we’ll encounter every style.”

The film’s three-time Annie-nominated production designer, Max Boas, whose credits include *Rise of the Guardians*, *Kung Fu Panda 3* and *Abominable*, mentions that one of the toughest aspects of the movie was that it was a “traveling film.” “We needed to get very organized for all the different locations, and because of the live-action element of these places, we needed to have a consistency in the way our animated characters looked in all of them,” says Boas. “And of course, we were inspired by the 2D sensibility, the linework, the graphic nature, his layouts and plant designs, all of them influenced our movie heavily. So, we had to figure out how to hold on to those elements but add the cinematic, volumetric lighting on top of the 2D sensibility. How do we maintain that with our characters so that the character lighting can still feel like the Smurfs have been pulled out of the 2D world?”

Boas says the Smurfs look amazing in

Smurf’s Up: Peyo’s famous blue characters go on a perilous journey across different worlds to bring Papa Smurf back to their village in the new musical, mixed-media feature directed by Chris Miller and written by Pam Brady.



"In a way, our movie is really about the power of the community, which is what gives the Smurfs their superpower!"

DIRECTOR CHRIS MILLER

three-quarter views that break the silhouette in the original comics. "The mouth was on the side in those views," he notes. "Translating that into 3D animation is tricky, so you need to cheat the visuals a bit. We worked with Cinesite to develop the right looks for the specific mouth shapes. The same is true with the hats, as their tops flop on the side, so stylistically, all of those had to be figured out for this movie. There was also the kind of 2D, hand-drawn effects that are mixed with 3D procedural effects. Those were a lot of fun to play with."

In addition to Peyo's work, Boas and his team were inspired by arcade culture and graphics found on video game boxes in the 1980s. "Because the Smurfs travel through these portals, through these different worlds, we knew it was going to feel like traveling through outer space," he says. "So we figured, what if our skies and backgrounds felt like a hand-painted, airbrushed graphics you would find in that era? We were really going for those kind of really bright colors and playfulness."

For Boas, one of the big musical numbers

featuring Rihanna as Smurfette was a major highlight. "There's a standout scene where she is in the outback, and there's a great transition from live action into the 2D/CG world," he recalls. "Smurfette dives from a tree into the water, and then it feels like outer space. It's kind of a magical moment when she's singing one of her new songs. Of course, because it's a song-and-dance number, it requires a lot of planning, but I grew up watching music videos. So, I enjoyed the elements of storytelling that unfold with the music. You need a little bit more color scripting to figure out how you are

going to handle those key moments, but I find the process really fun."

Shades of Muppets

The movie introduces audiences to a wide range of strange and memorable new characters, including Papa Smurf's brother Ken (voiced by Nick Offerman). There's also a whole group of interdimensional creatures called the Snooterpoots, led by their matriarch, Mama Poot (voiced by Natasha Lyonne). As Miller recalls, "When we were coming up with Mama Poot, I used my own dog, who is a Shih Tzu, as reference. The Poots ended up looking somewhere between a Wookiee and an Ewok baby. They are very similar to the Muppets ... they even move like them a bit."

The director says he truly values the underlying message behind this latest incarnation of the characters. "One of the main driving stories in the movie belongs to a character called No Name (voiced by James Corden), who is the only one in the Smurf Village without an identity or a built-in skill set, so he's on a bit of an obsessive, angst-ridden journey," he explains. "Fast-forward to the end of our movie, and he has taken this dangerous journey to rescue Papa Smurf. They come across these family secrets that actually reveal all the Smurfs' place in the universe. So, it's sort of an origin story about how they ended up in the forest. In a way, our movie is really about the power of the community, which is what gives the Smurfs their superpower!" ■

Paramount's *Smurfs* opens in theaters nationwide on July 18.





FIXED, FILTH, & THE JOY OF HAND-DRAWN ANIMATION

Samurai Jack and *Primal* creator Genndy Tartakovsky breaks down the Sony/Netflix comedy's long road to the screen—and why he never gave up on its cartoon climax.

By Jennifer Wolfe

It takes balls to make a movie like *Fixed*—and Genndy Tartakovsky didn't flinch. A gloriously raunchy R-rated comedy about a dog's last hurrah before the big snip, *Fixed* is also an expertly crafted homage to the golden age of cartoons. Beneath the balls-out chaos—including one of the filthiest cinematic climaxes ever animated—lies a loving tribute to hand-drawn animation, proof that lowbrow humor and high art can absolutely share the same leash.

Marking Sony Pictures Animation's first-ever hand-drawn feature, *Fixed* premiered at Annecy in June and debuts on Netflix August 13. Directed by Tartakovsky from a screenplay he co-wrote with Jon Vitti—with

They're joined by Fred Armisen as the dapper dachshund Fetch; Bobby Moynihan as Lucky, an anxious beagle; Beck Bennett as the snobby show dog Sterling; and River Gallo as Frankie, an intersex Doberman who works the door at an underground canine club where anything goes. Rounding out the cast are Michelle Buteau (*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Road Trip*) as Molasses and Aaron LaPlante

(*Primal*, *Unicorn: Warriors Eternal*) as Luther.

For Tartakovsky, *Fixed* has been a long time coming. First conceived in 2009 as an animal road-trip comedy called *Buds*, the film was announced in 2018 as Sony Pictures Animation's first R-rated project. In 2022 it was slated for theatrical release by Warner Bros. and New Line Cinema, only to be dropped in 2024 amid Warner Bros. Discovery's cost-cutting measures. The

Every Dog Has His Day: After languishing without a distributor for many months, Netflix premieres Sony's long-awaited feature *Fixed* on August 13.

a story by Tartakovsky, Vitti, Steve Greenberg, and Rich Lufrano—the film clocks in at a brisk 86 minutes and proudly wears its R rating. Tyler Bates and Joanne Higginbottom composed the score.

Wagging the Tail

The voice cast is as stacked as it is unhinged: Adam DeVine (*Righteous Gemstones*, *Workaholics*) voices Bull, a horny rescue mutt desperate for one last romp; Idris Elba (*Zootopia*, *The Jungle Book*, *Finding Dory*) is his best friend Rocco; and *Hotel Transylvania* alum Kathryn Hahn plays Bull's love interest Honey—a purebred Afghan hound with a decidedly foul mouth.



distribution rights reverted to Sony, with Netflix finally picking it up earlier this year. In the meantime, Tartakovsky directed three *Hotel Transylvania* films for Sony and wrote the script for the fourth, with the franchise ultimately grossing more than \$1 billion for the studio.

Throughout, Tartakovsky refused to water down the film's most outrageous set piece, describing the climactic sequence as a creative litmus test: "If whoever read it wanted that sequence out then they didn't fully understand what we were doing." It was, he says, the heart of the entire concept. "There is no movie without the sequence. Not only is it comedy gold, but also it's what everything is about."

Even Sony Pictures Animation President Kristine Belson had to be convinced. "At first she was like, 'Whoa, you can't do this,'" Tartakovsky recalls. "And then we had to talk it through. She trusted me enough to let me go through the process, and of course it's the most memorable scene after watching the movie."

His persistence paid off, resulting in a film that's unapologetically raunchy. It didn't hurt that Hahn herself pushed for even more

explicit material. "She was like, 'Make me as dirty as the boys.'"

The director sees this creative freedom as a direct response to the broader landscape, arguing that adult animation is the only place original ideas still thrive. "Everything else is mostly IP," he says. "The kids' business, the six-to-11 [demographic] ... that age group has disappeared, so nobody's even really making shows for them. So for the most part, besides my feature work, I only pitch adult shows."

Fixed might have the bawdy energy of a late-night sketch, but it's also a feature-length testament to what's possible in 2D

— on a budget that's less than half of what Tartakovsky's *Hotel Transylvania* films cost. With *Fixed* made for roughly \$30 million compared to *Hotel T*'s \$75 million price tags, it was never going to be a lavish CG affair.

At one point the film was set to be animated in CG, but when the budget didn't allow it Tartakovsky was quietly thrilled. "I thought for the money we were going to get like a TV-plus quality, not a full feature quality," Tartakovsky admits. "But instead we got some of the best animation I've seen — for me, for my sensibility."

Because Sony Pictures Animation isn't



built for 2D production, the team brought in Renegade Animation (*Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi*, *The Mr. Men Show*, *Tom and Jerry*) in Los Angeles and Lightstar Studios (*Central Park*, *Wonder Pets*, *Rio 2096: A Story of Love and Fury*) in Brazil to execute the animation for the film.

With Tartakovsky's approach, there was little left to chance. He personally tackled the storyboards, following the model of many anime directors. "There's something about the way anime is done, where the director does the boards. And I really believe in that," he says.

To keep a unified voice across the global team, he developed a hybrid system — starting with his own thumbnail passes, then relying on a trusted crew to flesh them out. The layouts captured roughly 70% of the acting, giving animators a clear blueprint to build on and elevate.

"It was pretty much all there in the layouts," Tartakovsky says. "And then they could just kill the acting and the actual





movement of it all.” It was an ideal setup for the roster of artists he’d been quietly tracking on Instagram for years, waiting for the right project to turn them loose. That core team of layout artists included Craig Kellman, who also designed the characters, along with Joe Moshier, Steven DeStefano and Adam Paloian.

The result is a film that feels at once painstakingly crafted and joyfully anarchic. Tartakovsky deliberately avoided what he calls the “extreme-ification” that’s become standard in modern kids animation—constant Dutch angles for fight sequences, everything dialed to 11. Instead, he and his team leaned on classic principles. “Good timing I feel like is very musical. It’s like composing a really good song ... you need a good rhythm.” *Fixed* nods directly to Tex Avery and Chuck Jones with its clean staging and unvarnished setups. Even the soundtrack was locked early to establish comedic beats, with 50 Cent’s “Candy Shop” baked into the animatic from day one.

In the Perfect Light

Of course, no Genndy Tartakovsky film would be complete without the fingerprints of his closest collaborators. Scott Wills, whose painterly sense of light and mood



“When you find something that’s kind of unique that you haven’t seen before, you want to hang on to it for dear life.”

WRITER-DIRECTOR GENNDY TARTAKOVSKY

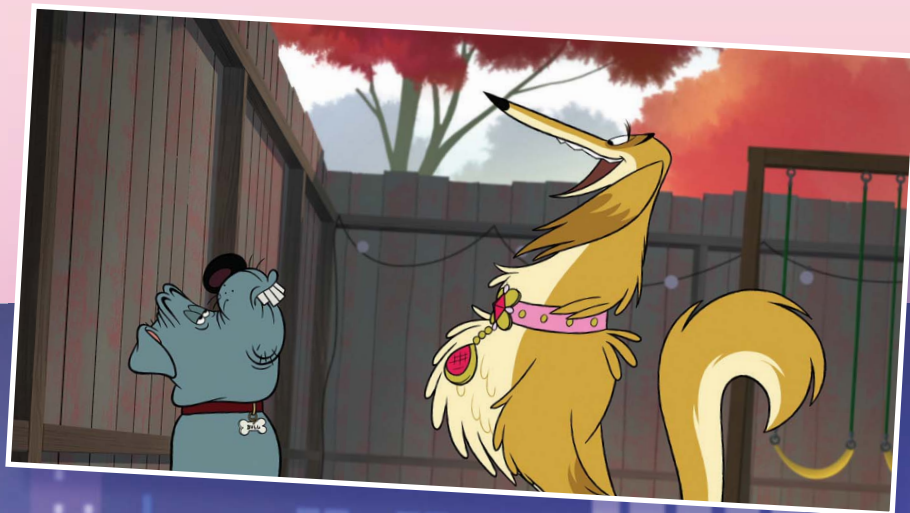
helped define the look of *Samurai Jack* and *Primal*, returned as production designer and art director. “When he paints light, you feel it ... you just kind of settle into it,” Tartakovsky says.

Michelle Murdocca, who produced the *Hotel Transylvania* movies, once again stood by Tartakovsky’s side, ensuring he had the creative runway to do something this audacious. “You want a partner, not a combatant ... she gets me and what my sensibility is.” Editor Mark Yeager, another *Hotel T* alum, brought the same editorial

shorthand to *Fixed*, shaping Tartakovsky’s rhythm-first approach into a cohesive, breathless 86-minute romp.

Together, they pulled off something risky and raw — a film no one else would have made. In the end, that’s what kept Tartakovsky chasing *Fixed* all these years. “When you find something that’s kind of unique that you haven’t seen before, you want to hang on to it for dear life.” ■

Genndy Tartakovsky’s *Fixed* premieres on Netflix on August 13.





**CTN Foundation
GIVE CREATIVE**

CTN Animation eXpo
November 20-23 2025
Burbank Airport Marriott



**BUILDING BRIDGES + CHANGING LIVES
FOR 17 YEARS**

Tickets available now!
ctn-events.com/ctnx2025



Community
CTN Studio Burbank
Year Round

*You are invited to be a part of
something extraordinary.*

+1 818 827 7138
ctn-events.com

**visit
BURBANK**





TV/STREAMING

THAT DANG OL' GANG IS BACK!

Mike Judge, Greg Daniels and Saladin K. Patterson spill the beans on this summer's eagerly anticipated *King of the Hill* revival on Hulu.

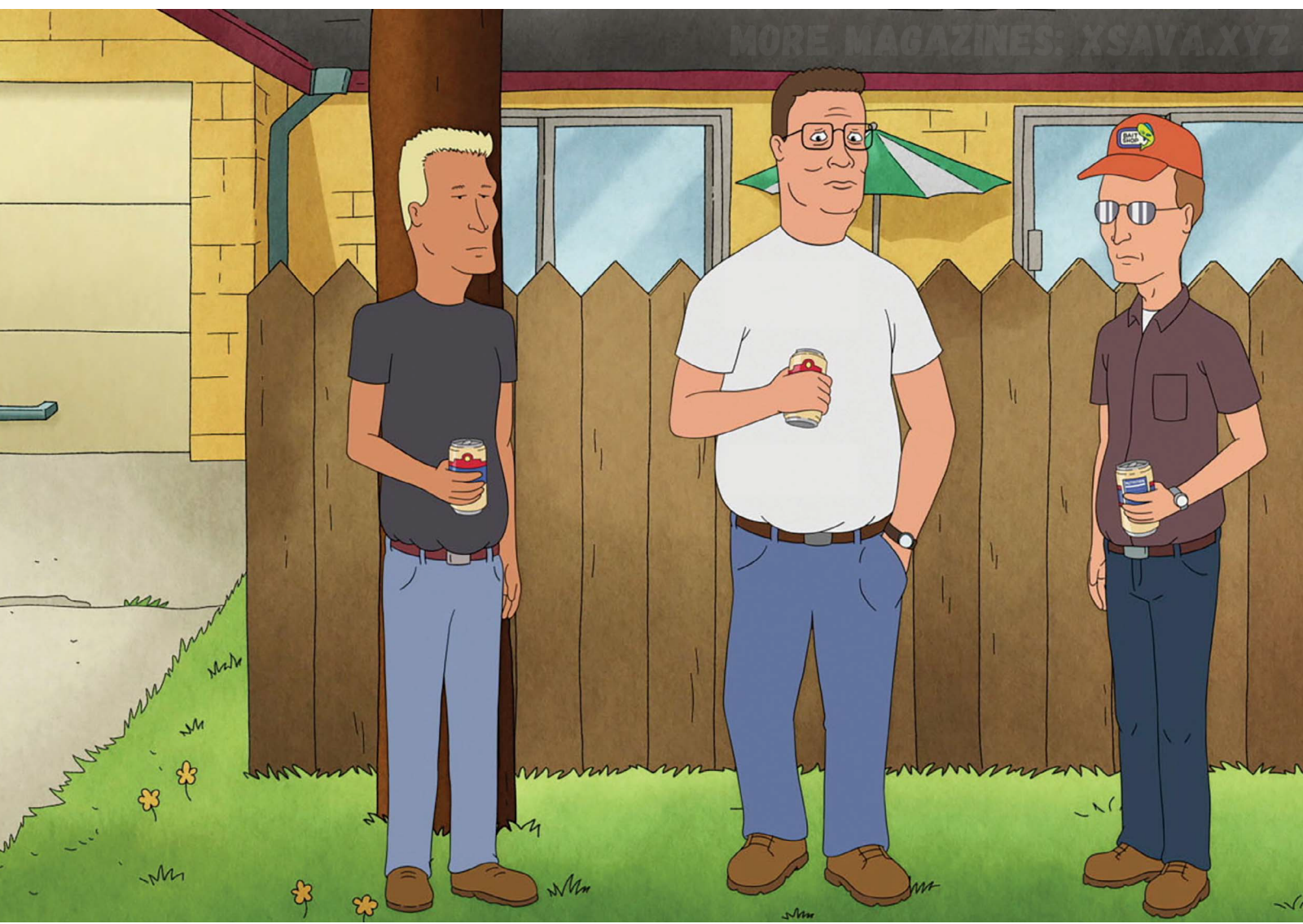
By Ramin Zahed

In January 1997, a new prime-time animated show joined the Fox TV lineup that was quite different from what audiences expected to see in animated comedies. Set in the fictional suburb of

Arlen, Texas, the low-fi show followed the gentle misadventures of propane salesman Hank Hill, his substitute teacher wife, Peggy, and their hilarious and eccentric son, Bobby, for 13 comforting and big-hearted seasons. So, when word got around that show creators Mike Judge and Greg Daniels

and showrunner Saladin K. Patterson were working on a revival of the series for Hulu, the fan base was quite ecstatic — to put it mildly!

Many of the original voice cast members are back to reprise their characters: Judge (Hank, Boomhauer), Kathy Najimy (Peggy),



Pamela Adlon (Bobby), Stephen Root (Bill), Ashley Gardner (Nancy) and Lauren Tom (Minh, Connie) continue to shine in the new season. (Johnny Hardwick's voice will also be heard posthumously; he recorded a few episodes as Dale before he passed away in August 2023.)

Back to Arlen, Texas

The 14th season of the show picks up with the gang after a time jump, and we find out that Hank and Peggy have come back to Arlen after Hank's retirement from a propane job in Saudi Arabia, and that our boy Bobby is now a chef in Dallas. Their world now includes drones and vapes and sushi bars, but the Hills and their friends are just as tight-knit, buttoned-down and hilarious as ever.

Mike Judge traces the origins of this new season to a 20th anniversary live table read with the original cast back in 2017 at San Francisco's Sketchfest. "We all thought it was really fun and went over really well," he recalls. "After that, Greg and I started

talking about doing the show again, or maybe coming up with a spinoff. Greg and I had a lot of other stuff going on at that time, but whenever we'd talk about *King of the Hill*, it seemed like it could be good to revisit it. There are just so many new things in the world that would annoy Hank, and when we hit on the idea that he had been working out of the country for a long period of time, then returned home, and that we would age the characters, I felt like it could be really fun to do again."

Daniels remembers that Judge asked him to read the stage directions, which is what he used to do in the old days. "We read the Season Two episode 'Husky Bobby' in front of a packed theater, and they were wild for it. So, we started to think, 'Hmmm, maybe a revival would be welcome.' Mike and I started meeting and pitching it out.

"We were having a great time," says Daniels. "When we came up with the ideas that Hank and Peggy were returning from the Aramco base out of the country, and Bobby was a chef in Dallas who wasn't going to college but was serving Southern Methodist University kids and running back into Connie, we pitched it to Fox. They weren't that interested, but it became the motivation for us starting Bandera Entertainment together, to continue working on animation projects that we loved and we found interesting. But a few years later, Hulu circled back ... and we got Saladin Patterson to run it and Wes Archer to supervise the animation again, and the pieces fell into place."

Early Toon Roots

Patterson, a seasoned producer and showrunner who worked on the stop-motion animated series *The PJs* early in his career, and whose TV credits also include *Frasier*, *The Wonder Years* (2021 version), *Psych* and *The Bernie Mac Show*, says he was excited to dive back into the world of animation after many years of overseeing live-action comedies.

"I have always been a fan of animation,

and two of my biggest influences are *Looney Tunes* cartoons and *Peanuts* animated specials. I had worked on an animated project with Greg [Daniels], Louis C.K. and Albert Brooks before, but unfortunately that show never made it to the air. I almost got to work



on the original *King of the Hill*, but then I went to *Frasier* instead. However, we always wanted to work together again!"

Patterson says he loves the opportunities that animation offers to writers on the show. "One of the unusual things about *King of the Hill* was that it was actually a lot more grounded than some live-action shows back then, like *My Name Is Earl*," he points out. "This new season of the show also gives us an opportunity to tackle some things that feel relevant today both culturally and socially."

Just like many fans of the show through the years, Patterson says he believes the original series offered some of the best storytelling on TV. "I really loved that, at the heart of it, *King of the Hill* was a cross-generational family show. Hank's approach to parenting and his take on manliness and manhood really reflected how small-town American reacted to outside influences. I'm originally from Alabama, and I had an appreciation for the fact that you want to protect some of the old-school values. That's why I also enjoyed working on *The Bernie Mac Show*, because Bernie and Hank had similar points of view when it came to raising kids.

Beyond Propane Accessories: Mike Judge and Greg Daniels' Emmy-winning series begins its 14th season after closing shop in 2009. Judge, Kathy Najimy, Pamela Adlon, Stephen Root and Lauren Tom reprise their original roles. (Johnny Hardwick, who died last year, is replaced by Toby Huss after



Images courtesy of Hulu



"When we hit on the idea that Hank'd been working out of the country for a long period of time, then returned home, and that we would age the characters, I felt it could be really fun to do again. There are just so many new things in the world that would annoy Hank."
CO-CREATOR MIKE JUDGE

I really responded to that whole concept of old school vs. new school. Audiences who tune in to the new season will see that we have found a way to really keep the core and heart of the show while wrapping it



in a contemporary envelope that makes it still quite relevant today."

Judge, who co-created the show with Daniels and based it on his own life in Richardson, Texas, almost three decades ago, says he loves seeing Hank Hill reacting to all the new annoying things in the world today. "I also like seeing Bobby grown up and the way he and Hank interact with Bobby as a young adult on his own. I especially like an episode in the new season where Hank and Bobby compete in a brewing competition. I think it's a great episode and shows what

the new family dynamic is like, and it feels good."

Daniels agrees. "I also love seeing Bobby as a 21-year old. I enjoy the stories of his life working at a restaurant in Dallas, and interacting with Joseph, Chane and Connie as young adults."

Patterson points out that the writing team tried not to dive into today's bitterly divided politics. "The show has always been more about the family and culture rather than politics," he notes. "But we touched upon immigration a little bit, but not in an overtly political way. We have no idea what these policies will be two years down the line, and everything could change by the time the show airs. So we must be careful to be focused on more cultural and generational changes, ironies and conflicts."

One of the benefits of working on an animated comedy like *King of the Hill*, per Patterson, is that the writers and voice actors are not limited by sets and locations. "Sure, you can tweak the laws of physics a little bit, but animation can also give you a certain kind of freedom," he says. "For example, I love the fact that we had an episode that is set in a version of Comic-Con. It was fun to be able to represent that scale on the show. It would be really difficult and expensive to shoot a live-action show at Comic-Con. We were also able to show every aspect of Bobby's restaurant — from the kitchen and the main dining area, as well as what his suppliers look [like] — all of that was much easier thanks to animation!"

As audiences tune in to catch up with the Texas clan, Patterson hopes he and the team have been able to repeat what made the original show so special. "That would be the heart, the storytelling, the strong, memorable characters and all the relatable conflicts between them," he says. "I hope audiences will enjoy seeing Hank



Greg Daniels



and Peggy at a different point in their lives as they try to figure out this new chapter in their lives as a couple and parents of a grown-up Bobby. I also really hope that people will feel the show is relevant in our world today and not just as a throwback to 15 years ago!"



"I really hope that people will feel the show is relevant in our world today and not just as a throwback to 15 years ago!"

EXEC PRODUCER AND SHOWRUNNER
SALADIN PATTERSON

Judge agrees: "I hope they enjoy it and find it funny in the same way that they always did. There are shows I watch that are just kind of comfort-watching, like when I was a kid it was *The Andy Griffith Show* or *The Beverly Hillbillies* and many others. Lately it's been *What We Do in the Shadows* in my household. There's not much I take away from those shows, other than they're fun to watch and make me laugh. So I hope *King of the Hill* is like that for our viewers." ■

The new 10-episode season of *King of the Hill* premieres August 4 on Hulu.

L.A. COMIC CON

SEPTEMBER 26-28, 2025
LOS ANGELES CONVENTION CENTER



GET TICKETS @ [COMICCONLA.COM](https://comicconla.com)

Los Angeles' favorite celebration of pop culture, movies, comics, cosplay, anime, gaming, horror and everything in between.



ENTERTAINMENT GUESTS

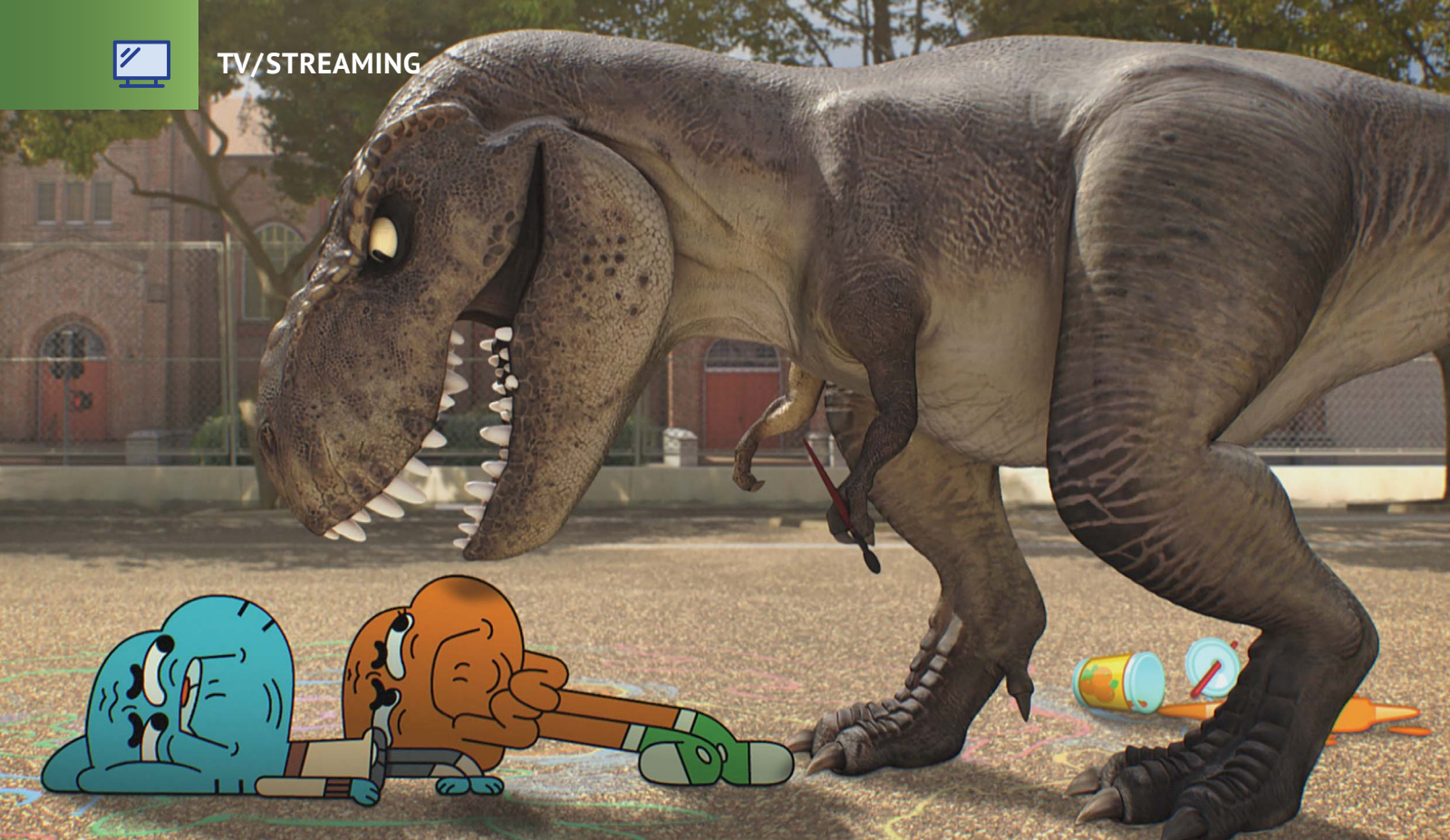
Elizabeth Olsen Paul Bettany Charlie Cox Jon Bernthal
Vincent D'Onofrio Elden Henson David Tennant Billie Piper
Freema Agyeman Matthew Lillard David Arquette Skeet Ulrich
Jamie Kennedy Alyson Stoner Vincent Martella David Errigo Jr. Olivia Olson
Neil Newbon Devora Wilde Jennifer English Maggie Robertson Aliona Baranova Tim Downie
Zach Aguilar Zachary Gordon Luci Christian Sonny Strait Ian Sinclair AND MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED

ARTISTS AND CREATORS

Marc Silvestri, Emma Kubert, Rose Besch, Frank Tieri, Pornsak Pichetshote, Julio Anta, Mark Russell, Rachta Lin, Andy Kubert, Tom King, Ryan Ottley, Creees, Peter Tomasi, Charles Soule, Ryan Browne, Ben Percy, Jacoby Salcedo, Asia Simone, Meghan Fitzmartin, Brett Bean, Kyle Higgins, Derek Hunter, Brian Buccellato, Ryan Parrott, Melisa Flores, Tini Howard, Blake Howard, Jody Houser, Agnes Garbowska, Cody Zigar, Tim Sheridan, Marc Guggenheim, Collin Kelly, Josh Trujillo, David Pepose, Greg Weisman, Morgan Hampton, Josie Campbell, Dave Baker, David M. Booher, Don Aguillo, E.J. Su, Eric Lewald, Julia Lewald, Jose Pimienta, Jay Fotos, Kayden Phoenix, Kevin Grevioux, Larry Houston, Sam de la Rosa, Steven E. Gordon AND MORE



TV/STREAMING



THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN OF GUMBALL WATTERSON

Ben Bocquelet's inventive cartoon makes a much-anticipated comeback in *The Wonderfully Weird World of Gumball*.

By Jeff Spry

Among the many explanations for *Gumball*'s lasting appeal since its 2011 debut on Cartoon Network is the series' unabashed desire to make viewers laugh with its surreal, reality-warping universe. This summer, a new spinoff (not to be confused as a seventh season) of *The Amazing World of Gumball* will arrive from Hanna-Barbera Studios Europe. Titled *The Wonderfully Weird World of Gumball*, this 40-episode, bite-sized cartoon bonanza will make a splash on Disney+ and Hulu in the U.S., and Cartoon Network and HBO Max in international territories later this fall.

This colorful incarnation of the zany show featuring the antics of anthropomorphic blue feline Gumball Watterson, adopted goldfish brother Darwin, younger sister Anaïs, parents Richard and Nicole and oddball friends and classmates continues its predecessor's tradition of fusing 2D and 3D animation, live-action, puppetry and CGI.

On the eve of its anticipated arrival, we connected with *Gumball* creator Ben Bocquelet and executive producers/series directors Matt Layzell and Erik Fountain



to hear what's on tap for the kooky denizens of Elmore, California, when *The Wonderfully Weird World of Gumball* premieres.

Elevating the Cat

"We really wanted this to be kind of a continuation of where the show left off," Layzell explains to *Animation Magazine*. "So we wanted more of the same great *Gumball* stories, like returning to some of our favorite characters. Really doing more of the same and trying to elevate things and tell new stories with the characters we already had. That was the mission, to do as good and even better than what fans were already familiar with."

As mastermind of the worldwide *Gumball* phenomenon, Bocquelet says one of the things he's most thrilled about with this spinoff series is to not be doing it all by himself this time.

"With Erik and Matt working it over, it was a new process that was involved," he adds. "It was a little tricky because we had a *Gumball* movie planned in between, so we had to reinsert ourselves into the continuity of the show without that big special story to kind of bridge things. But we're entering all that stuff about the overarching plot in the new season itself. I'm just excited to be doing more stupid things with these

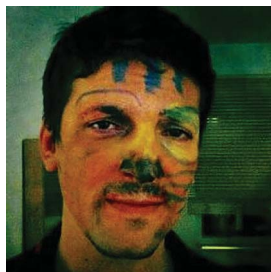
characters and friends right here."

To keep the momentum and flow, animation duties for *The Wonderfully Weird World of Gumball* fell again to the talented folks at Studio Soi, which is headquartered in Ludwigsburg, Germany.

"I'm a longtime *Gumball* fan, and this is my first season working on the show," Fountain notes. "TV has a very limited pipeline and everything is written, designed and planned out in Burbank, and then it's packaged up and sent off somewhere overseas, and you

Cat and Fish Tale: The 12-year-old dynamic cat (Gumball) and his adopted goldfish brother (Darwin) are back for more colorful adventures on *The Wonderfully Weird World of Gumball* on Hulu and Disney+ this summer.

creatively invested on a level he hasn't seen before. "A lot of the times you get people that are just working at a gig," he notes. "Here the animators care, the designers care, the modelers care, and they want it to be really good. And they're up for the



"It costs tears, blood and other body fluids, but we know that's how it is. It's all up on the screen."

CREATOR BEN BOCQUELET

cross your fingers and you hope you get back something good. So I was so curious how a show like *Gumball* got made on the same budget and it looked so diverse and crazy. Just from a production standpoint, it blows my hair back. Because it's an international show; it's written in one country and made in another."

Fountain says the team at Studio Soi is

challenge. You don't get that with a lot of productions. It's pretty wild. It's all coming from Ben. He set the style and the tone, and he's such a funny writer, and he's so good about never taking half measures. That's the guide to follow, where you make something the best version of itself, take it as far as it can go and then try to carry that through every step of the process. Hopefully we've



done that. We tried really hard to maintain that high standard.”

Bocquelet echoes Fountain on the effort that goes into delivering *Gumball* to kids and their families across the planet.

“It costs tears, blood and other body fluids, but we know that’s how it is,” he jokes. “It’s all up on the screen. Ideas for stories come from our private lives, stuff we share and think it’s amongst friends and in a safe space ... then no, we can make money with it! It’s a lot of things that would happen to a child or an adolescent or something like

that, and it often stems from real places.”

It’s a tricky task to keep conjuring up the *Gumball*’s special brand of animated magic. But that’s exactly what the franchise has done, earning it broad appeal and longevity in the process.

“When we were writing it, we always wanted it to come from a real place, and I think that’s where real comedy comes from,” Layzell points out. “If it feels real and is connected to a real human experience. As we were making it, we realized that the episodes of *Gumball* kind of fall into three

categories, to help us think about how to plan out the season.

“The first was a story that came from a real kid place, like something that we’d gone through personally, or we’d seen someone experience in high school, an awkward type of situation, or some sort of family dynamic funny story,” he adds. “The second was more of a social commentary on something happening in the world now and trying to put a funny spin on it. The third was, in classic *Gumball* fashion, like more of an experimental episode, something that really used a special animation technique or focused in on a specific character that we’d tell this crazy story through. So, as we were shaping the season, that’s how we’d go about each episode. Either of those categories we were sure to dig in on it and make it the best version of what it could be.”

The other aspect that sets *Gumball* apart from other shows is the production’s ability to farm things out to artists for special animation sequences, which only adds to the maelstrom of creative madness.

Recapturing the Visual Magic

“But the bulk of the show, even though it’s so varied, is all done through one studio,” Fountain adds. “Another person carrying a lot of the weight is our art director in London, Joe Sparrow. He exceeds his title. He’s not just an art director; he’s also an incredible animator, and sometimes if we need to execute something that’s a big ask, he’ll be crucial in making sure that gets done.”

Obviously, there are imitators out there trying to capitalize on *Gumball*’s popularity, but the creators, though teasing that they’d like to crush all their enemies, maintain that there’s always room for more.

“Making *Gumball*, you kind of have your blinders on,” explains Layzell. “It’s such a cool sandbox to play in and you’re building off of six seasons of what I think is the best animated TV show out there. You’re in it and you have to try and pop your own ideas and really challenge everyone working on it to elevate what they’re doing. I just got consumed with that, and that’s part of the beauty of *Gumball*, in that it is its own special world and you can really get lost in there.” ■



***The Wonderfully Weird World of Gumball* premieres on Hulu and Disney+ on July 28.**



THE FAMILY TIES THAT BIND

Acclaimed artist and animation veteran Lisa Hanawalt gives us the scoop on her new Netflix project, *Long Story Short*.



By Ramin Zahed

Fans of funny, poignant and sophisticated adult animation will have a major treat awaiting them in August when the new show by three-time Emmy-nominated and Annie-winning creator Raphael Bob-Waksberg (*Bolack Horseman*) premieres on Netflix. Titled *Long Story Short*, the 2D-animated series follows the adventures of a tightly knit Northern California Jewish family through the years. Featuring the voices of Bob Feldman, Abbi Jacobson, Max Greenfield, Angelique Cabral, Nicole Byer, Dave Franco and Michaela Dietz, the show is produced by Michael Eisner's The Tornante Company, with animation delivered by ShadowMachine. We had the chance to chat with the show's brilliant supervising producer Lisa Hanawalt, who was also a supervising producer and designer on *Bolack Horseman* and created the cult favorite *Tuca & Bertie*, which ran on Netflix and Adult Swim (2019-2022). Here is what she told us about her new venture:

Animation Magazine: Congrats on the fantastic new show. Can you tell us a bit about how and when you came on board?

Lisa Hanawalt: I believe it was winter about a year and a half ago. I see a lot of animation pitches, and this one just felt like a breath of fresh air. I've known Raphael forever and I'm really familiar with his writing, tone and voice. He sent me an outline detailing the characters and a rough sketch of what episodes were going to be. I loved the fact that it was very personal and original. Raphael and I kind of



grew up together and we went to the same middle school and high school in Palo Alto, California. I know his family, so I could see touches in there that were personal. I could recognize his mom and sister, although the show's characters are very fictionalized. I felt there was also a lot of space for me to do my thing because there were no visuals attached yet. I'd been wanting to work on something more grounded since *Bolack* had animal people and *Tuca & Bertie* featured a lot of magical realism. I'm not entirely done with those kinds of project, but *Long Story Short* allowed me to do something new and different.

What do you think makes the premise of the show perfect for animation?

It's both very relatable and funny, yeah. There are many cartoony moments that balance out the more serious and sad stuff. I think that's what Raphael does best: He really nails that delicate balance every time. He really sees the full picture and understands what animation can bring to the real world. It's funny, but I immediately knew what was needed as I pictured it in my head. I got very excited because I knew it needed to be really warm and hand-drawn and feel like a comic book or evoke children's illustration or perhaps like *Peanuts* cartoons. Some of the material could come across

as quite sad; or when you see the family bickering, it really needed that warmth or childlike quality.

Can you talk about the creative process on the show? Is it similar to *Bolack Horseman's*?

Yes, so I would go to the table reads or read the script, then, I'd immediately start picturing what the characters looked like, and I'd break it all down. Then I'd have a conversation with Raphael about who the characters are, whether my impressions were correct. What there were feeling at that certain point in their lives, and what the time jumps involved. They would present a fun challenge because there's no baseline for the characters. I mean the first episode, which features the bar mitzvah served as my baseline, because I spent the most time with those designs, but there are no defaults. I have a lot of timelines and graphics taped to my office wall so that I can reference and fill in the gaps between the years and the episodes and what they all look like through these time periods. It's like a math problem — but for art!

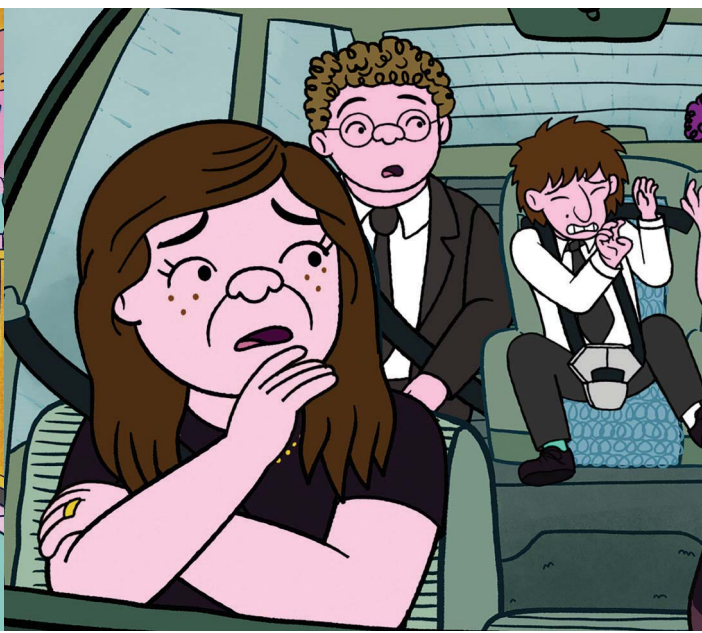
Did you look at the real backgrounds in his life and your own life to for inspiration?

Well, I already knew that because I knew his house and our high school. We even made some video for a class together back

at his house when we were growing up in the Bay Area. So, that background has a very specific feel, maybe it doesn't have it anymore because it has changed so much, but there was something very specific about growing up there in the '80s and '90s. One of the first drawings I made was the family's childhood home, with a bit of Eichler modernist inspiration, too. There were a lot of big oak trees there, too. I drew Avi standing in front of the middle school, something about the light, where it looks like it's sunny, but there's gray clouds. That's something I'll always remember from that period and that location. There's always a yellow rim light on the characters. I wanted all of that to be really specific to that feeling.

What would you say was the biggest challenge on this show for you?

The time jumps were a bit hard to keep track of, but we had help doing that, so we were figuring it out as we went further along. When we decide that a character is going to lose his hair, then we must be consistent throughout. Raphael is really detail oriented, which I love. Some of the characters were hard to figure out; Naomi (Lisa Edelstein), for example. I literally kept drawing Raphael's mom, and I had to remember that we needed a little distance. It couldn't look like her, because the show isn't entirely based on the real characters. Yoshi was tough too, because he needed to be a goofball, almost like Todd from *Bolack*, but he's also quite handsome when he grows up. I nailed Avi right away, who looks a little like my own brother, a little like Raphael, and a bit like Charlie Brown. I nailed Shira right away because



she's probably the character I feel closest to you — she's kind of bratty and selfish!

Was the whole experience a bit nostalgic for you?

Oh yes, even in decorating the house, which I worked with our art director Allison DuBois (she's more in charge of the backgrounds, and I take care of the characters), but we actually populated the house with objects that I remembered from our parents' houses, and the kind of stuff they had at the time. Raphael and I grew up in very similar households, and both our parents would travel and bring back objects from their trips — you know, that kind of specific Bay Area liberal household.

Tell us a bit about the animation and how it's done please?

The animation is handled by ShadowMachine here in L.A. and Big Star in S. Korea, who also worked on *Bolack Horseman* and *Tuca & Bertie*. The animation is done in Toon Boom Harmony. We hadn't really done a Harmony show before, so we had to figure out certain aspects of it at first. We had one version of the characters up close and another from far away, so we had to get that balance right. We did the previous shows in Flash.

What is your favorite part of the new series?

I love that contrast between the happy and really funny, and the sad. I remember sometimes during the table reads, there would be parts where I would yell out loud, "Ohhh nooo!" and I'd have to say, "Oh my God, Raphael!" and "I'm sorry I yelled out loud!" He'd say, "No, I love that you have that reaction because it means that you really care about the characters." I'm not really interested in shows where I'm not emotionally invested. I mean, I go to

work every day and I do what needs to be done, but I really care about it, too. That's so important to me.

What's your take on the current state of animation?

I did feel that for a while there was a lot of constriction and fear in the industry, as well as a lot of just waiting around in limbo. It seemed that they wanted to develop things, but then they didn't want to actually buy them. They would fully animate a show, and still didn't know if they were going to air or stream it. I just wish there would be less fear and more commitment to new things. But there are still some really vital,

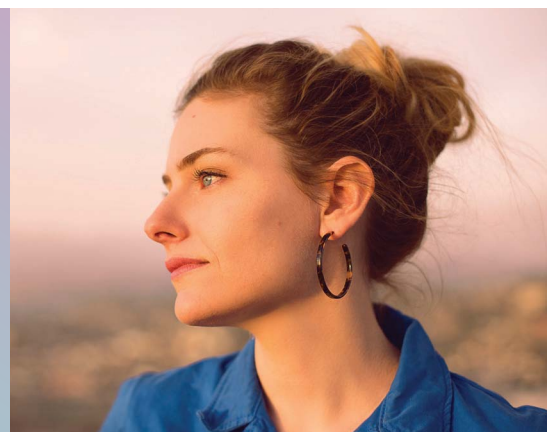
interested, and think you're really missing out on something if you take that route.

Can you share any advice for newbie animation folks?

I think if you want to sell a show, it should always come from what you actually want to see on TV. Maybe that's very idealistic of me, because ultimately you should also be thinking about what could possibly sell if you want to be successful. But for me, if I'm not interested in watching it myself, then there's no point in making it. From a technical standpoint, I think simpler is always better when it comes to making art that's going to be animated. It just makes it

"If I'm not interested in watching the show myself, then there's no point in making it. From a technical standpoint, I think simpler is also always better."

**SUPERVISING PRODUCER
AND DESIGNER LISA HANAWALT**



vibrant stuff being made, like the show *Common Side Effects*. That was really cool and interesting to me. I'm always optimistic and hope that things are cyclical. Our show is made by humans and it tells stories by people for people. I have very little interest in work made by AI, and I know some people look at AI and they have big dollar signs in their eyes because they can save on labor or whatever. But I'm just really not

so much easier. I always make the mistake all the time where I want to add complicated patterns, and sometimes that stuff is worth it, because the little details make the difference. But overall, simpler is good. It doesn't have to be crazy complicated to be beautiful! ■

***Long Story Short* premieres on Netflix on August 22.**





TV/STREAMING

SIMPATICO SIBLINGS

Wylde Pak creators take us behind the scenes of their high-energy new Nickelodeon show.



It's always exciting to see a fun, new original 2D-animated show find its own voice. The new summer series *Wylde Pak*, which is created by Paul Watling and Kyle Marshall, follows the adventures of two half-siblings as they adjust to their newly formed Korean-American family. The show, which features the voices of Nikki Castillo, Benjamin

Plessala, Jee Young Han, Ben Pronsky and Jean Yoon, is the second production following *Rock Paper Scissors* that was launched via Nickelodeon's Intergalactic Shorts Program. The show's executive producers, Watling (*The Tiger's Apprentice*), Marshall (*The Loud House*) and Seonna Hong (*The Wild Robot*) were kind enough to answer a few of our questions about their new toon:

Animation Magazine: Can you tell us a bit about the origins of the show?

Paul Watling: To be honest, it began with spaghetti and meatballs at Little Dom's restaurant in Los Feliz (in Los Angeles); Kyle and I would meet regularly to catch up and talk shop. We'd hatched an earlier iteration of the show that revolved around Jack and Lily, however there was a whole sci-fi element. It was actually in development at another studio for a while ... until it wasn't, of course.

Fast forward to us pitching a slew of ideas to Nickelodeon, one of which was the fragmented relics of this thing we'd been developing, and that was the one Nick really responded to: specifically, the two main characters, Jack and Lily. We ditched the whole sci-fi element and started thinking about the stories we wanted to tell, and for us, the most authentic storytelling comes from experience. That's where we looked to start shaping the family and the



Kyle Marshall



Paul Watling



Seonna Hong

Images: Nickelodeon

Cool Clan: *Wylde Pak* follows half-siblings Lily Pak (Nikki Castillo), a competitive and fun-loving 11-year-old girl, and Jack Wylde (Benjamin Plessala), an adventurous 13-year-old boy, as they navigate their evolving family dynamics, friendships, and hijinks within their newly formed Korean American family.

world these kids would inhabit.

I had recently met my wife, Seonna, and lucked out by getting a two-for-one, in that I also got a Tigerlily, my stepdaughter. Having stepparents of my own, I had a full circle moment and thought there were some juicy stories to mine here. Kyle was a new dad as well, to two awesome little dudes, Jack and Charlie. We both realized we had no idea what we were doing when it came to adulting and joked about waiting for the real grown-ups to show up and help out. We liked this idea of exploring the messiness of family life, relationships, and the notion that there is no one size fits all when it comes to family. We threw all our own experiences, good, bad and everything in between, into the DNA of this show and let it evolve from there.

How long did it take to get the show off the ground?

Kyle Marshall: We originally pitched the concept to Nickelodeon in 2019, and it became part of their Intergalactic Shorts Program. We made a seven-minute short along with a series bible and a few sample scripts. It was a rollercoaster, as all development is, and that original short looks and feels completely different from what you see now. However, the family and their relationships remain the same (it even had a different title). It was cool to make that short and see what was working and what wasn't. Small tweaks were made to the look, sound and tone, which totally elevated the series once we started production. We wanted to push the show and were lucky to have the studios' support in overhauling these elements, resulting in what is now *Wylde Pak*.

How would you describe the visual style of *Wylde Pak*?

Kyle: We wanted *Wylde Pak* to have its own unique look but still feel familiar. The series tries to capture the messiness and beauty of family dynamics, and it was important to us to have that reflected in the design. Our art director, JiSoo Kim, and her team nailed this idea. The backgrounds are all a bit wonky with a messier line, no perfect angles, or straight



lines. The characters are animated in Harmony, and our animation studio, Jam Filled, created a line that looks more organic, giving it subtle movement with each frame. The directing and board teams also played a huge part in influencing the style. The compositions and backgrounds are dynamic and wonky, but what really makes it unique is the way our teams handle expressions and posing. Those boards influenced everyone down the line, from design and color to animation.

What sets the show apart in this busy animation market for children?

Kyle: The idea was to make a show that we enjoyed watching. We wanted the characters to be genuine and the stories to come from an honest place. They often start small and simple, then spiral out of control. Although the series has an arc, we viewed the season like a mixtape. You will tune in to watch the characters you love, but the episodes can be wildly different in tone, so you have no idea what you're getting yourself into each week.

What were your biggest challenges?

Paul: We've been doing this for a few years now, and we wanted

to step outside our comfort zone. We put together a team that would push us, just a crazy, talented group of people with different styles and experiences. We gave them freedom to run, and in the beginning, it was a little messy, but once we started putting it all together, we found exactly what we were looking for, and it was pretty amazing.

Who are your big animation heroes/inspirations?

Paul: Probably the three biggest influences were *The Amazing World of Gumball*, *My Neighbors the Yamadas* and *Freaks and Geeks*.

What do you hope audiences will take away from the show?

Kyle: A few laughs, a couple tears, and to know that there's not just one blueprint for a family.

Seonna Hong: We hope kids see themselves, their families and their friends in this show, whether it's through multicultural, multigenerational, or blended family dynamics. All the characters are multi-dimensional, which I think is important because that's what makes it feel authentic, too.

Do you have a favorite storyline this season?

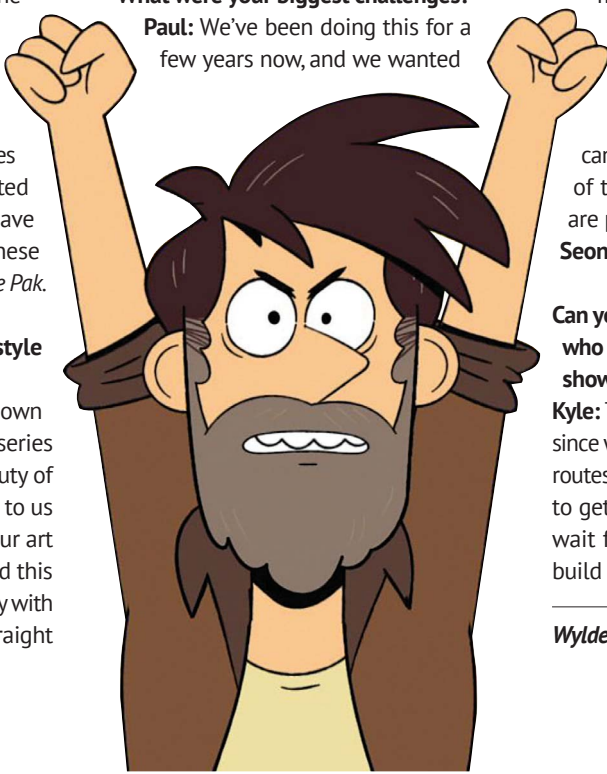
Kyle: It's hard to pick just one, and we can't be giving any spoilers, but the journey of their entire summer is a storyline we are proud of.

Seonna: And any episode with Halmoni!

Can you perhaps offer some advice for those who dream of launching their own animated show one day?

Kyle: The industry has dramatically changed since we started. There are so many alternative routes outside of the traditional studio model to get your work out there. Use them, don't wait for a studio to come knocking. If you build it, they will come. ■

***Wylde Pak* premiered on Nickelodeon in June.**





TV/STREAMING



Songs in the Key of Peanuts

Apple TV+'s memorable special *Snoopy Presents: A Summer Musical* delivers a timely lesson and five catchy tunes by Ben Folds.

By Ramin Zahed

Summer camp is a staple of both the *Peanuts* comic strip and its long-running animated specials. This month, Apple TV+ viewers will get a new, musical take on this subject when *Snoopy Presents: A Summer Musical* makes its debut on the streamer.

The half-hour special, which features music by Emmy-nominated composer Jeff Morrow and popular singer-songwriter and

composer Ben Folds, centers on first-time camper Sally Brown who is nervous about being at a new and unknown place. The rest of the *Peanuts* gang also discover that their favorite summer camp is shutting down and join forces to save it. Meanwhile, Snoopy and Woodstock set off on an adventure of their own when they come across a treasure map!

Directed by Erik Wiese and written by Craig Schulz (son of Charles M. Schulz, the creator of *Peanuts*), Bryan Schulz (Craig's son) and Cornelius Uliano (*The Peanuts Movie*), the

special is billed as the first *Peanuts* musical in 35 years. During a recent Zoom interview with *Animation Magazine*, Craig Schulz and Erik Wiese discussed the standout qualities of this new charming 2D-animated offering (produced by WildBrain Studios).

It's a New Special, Charlie Brown!

"The idea of producing an animated musical special was something that was really important to me," says Schulz, who also executive produced Apple's six previous



Snoopy Presents special, as well as *The Peanuts Movie* (2015), *Snoopy in Space*, *The Snoopy Show* and *Camp Snoopy*. “We put everything into it and spent a lot of time making this one, and it was well worth the wait.”

“Being in the *Peanuts* world is one of my absolute favorite things, and as a creative who does storyboards and directs animation, you really feel like that frame goes away, and you live with these characters every single day,” says Wiese, who was nominated for an Emmy for directing the *Sonic Prime* TV series last year. “Of course, to work with Craig and all the talented people at WildBrain has been a dream.”

Schulz mentions that he had been watching a lot of the great musicals at home. “I had this vision in my mind of all the characters dancing and singing,” he recalls. “I tried

to get Derek Hough on board to do the choreography for it. I told our co-writers, Bryan and Neil, about the idea, and they said, ‘Dad, we’ve never written a musical before. We don’t know where to start!’ I said, let’s get the basic story down and we’ll worry about where to drop the music in later. Before long, everything just developed along the way, and it became exactly what I was hoping for!”

To compose the special’s five memorable songs, Schulz and his team reached out to Emmy-nominated singer-songwriter Ben Folds, who collaborated with them on the 2022 holiday special *It’s*

Season in the Sun: The new *Peanuts* special, *A Summer Musical*, features music composed by Emmy nominees Jeff Morrow and Ben Folds. The story follows Sally Brown as she faces her anxieties over her first camp experience, and Snoopy and Woodstock as they search for hidden treasure.

the Small Things, *Charlie Brown*. “Craig always imagined Ben in that role,” says Wiese. “I just love the emotion he brings out,” says Schulz. “I watched the ‘Dandelion’ sequence again the other night, and I hadn’t seen it for a while. The music just brings tears to my eyes. To me there’s really nothing better than strong music backed up by great emotion. I always says, ‘You can watch a dirt cloud if the music’s great.’ But when you have great animation and music, you always get a winner!”

Wiese also points out that music has always played a key role in the *Peanuts* animated specials and series through the years. “The piano is a key character in this world,” he notes. “Ben is our piano man, our modern-day Billy Joel. He’s such a poet, and he can be really emotional. You always come away thinking about the lyrics and that also provided a lot of information for me to come up with the visuals.”

Like all the previous Apple TV+ *Peanuts* specials and series, the team at WildBrain in Vancouver were responsible for the projects beautiful 2D animation, produced with Harmony and After Effects. “They’re just incredible artists and animators,” says Wiese. “The whole project looks like 2D feature animation. It’s soft and supple when you need it to be, but they’re not afraid to snap to poses or do multiple smears when needed. That’s something you don’t normally associate with *Peanuts* animation, but you can go back to the Bill Melendez specials, and they were doing UPA-style material and some very cool tricks. You can get some really subtle emotional moments, where you can keep the animation soft and fluid.”

“Erik gave the animation team the freedom to create new things,”



adds Schulz. “We write the story, but then they add their own creativity to the scenes. There’s a scene in which Peppermint Patty blows a bubble and pops it, and she actually looks at the little comic strip that comes

because we think they’ll be really good at doing a musical dance number. Sally had some choreography in her song, and she was stomping her feet and really stepping up. That’s when the actor/ animator comes

wonderful, multicultural platform to spread messages. My goal from the get-go for these *Snoopy Presents* special was to create things that children and their parents could talk about. We have tried to include a lot of good messages and lessons in our specials, and I’m most proud of that.”

Wiese concludes, “I’d also like to add that there aren’t really another characters that have this ability out there. When you look at the full scope of what’s happening on TV, I don’t think there are properties that allow you to dig deeply the way *Peanuts* does. I’ve had conversations with my friends about how you can come together when things are really hard. These days, we can all use things that make us feel good and empower us, and who better than to uplift us than Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Sally and the rest of the *Peanuts* gang?” ■

***Snoopy Presents: A Summer Musical* premieres on Apple TV+ on August 15.**



“We can all use things that make us feel good and empower us, and who better than to uplift us than Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Sally and the rest of the *Peanuts* gang?”

DIRECTOR ERIK WIESE

with the bubble gum. I thought that scene was so clever and subtle, especially the way she gives that chuckle. You could have made that scene over the top and have her actually read the comic, and make it on the nose.”

Wiese recalls another instance where the animators added their own special insights to improve a scene. “Sally has a song sequence, where she’s coming down the stairs,” he says. “I implied some things, but then the animators went off and did something completely different. They showed me the rough, and I thought it was fantastic and fluid stuff. Sometimes, unexpected things would be created. Animators and storyboards are actors, after all. It’s just like placing actors in front of cameras, and these animators are cast to certain scenes

in and brought that special magic.”

Shaping Young Hearts and Minds

Both Schulz and Wiese are thrilled that the new special allows them to reach out to millions of fans around the world. “The *Peanuts* characters are the greatest at sending messages,” says Schulz. “The cast and the genuine nature of these kids offer a



“My goal from the get-go for these *Snoopy Presents* specials was to create things that children and their parents could talk about. We have tried to include a lot of good messages and lessons in our specials, and I’m most proud of that.”

WRITER/EXECUTIVE PRODUCER CRAIG SCHULZ

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF

ANIMATION MAGAZINE



Exploring the Thrills of *Aztec Batman: Clash of Empires*.

Diving in to the magical world of Yasuhiro Aoki's *ChaO*.

Vivienne Medrano's *Helluva Boss* Transfers to Prime Video.

It's Time to Check-In to Netflix's *Haunted Hotel*.

OTTAWA International Animation Festival Sept 24-28 / 2025



Poster design by Toril Kove



A Peek at the CG Crystal Ball

This year's SIGGRAPH confab in Vancouver offers a look back at the 30th anniversary of *Toy Story* and a look forward to the medium's future possibilities.



By Ellen Wolff

When the curtain rises on the Computer Animation Festival at SIGGRAPH 2025 in Vancouver (Aug. 10-14), attendees will be treated to a celebration of the first computer-animated feature ever made. This year marks the 30th anniversary of *Toy Story*, and Pixar co-founder Ed Catmull is traveling to Canada to introduce the movie and share an insider's view of how the milestone film came to be.

Catmull, one of SIGGRAPH's most

prominent pioneers, will also field audience questions and offer perspective on his 50 years attending the conference. "There are lots of rabbit holes I could go down," he admits. But focusing on *Toy Story*, Pixar's pioneering CG movie, will allow him to explore the digital transformation that made the film possible.

"As technology develops, it gets to a point that causes a change in the industry," he observes. "Pixar signed a contract with Disney to make *Toy Story* in 1991, the year that *Terminator 2* introduced the first major CG character. Then in '93, *Jurassic Park* arrived,

and *Toy Story* came out in '95. In four years, the film industry solidified a digital transformation."

A Giant Step Forward

Catmull recalls that Disney thought the movie, directed by John Lasseter and penned by Lasseter, Andrew Stanton and current Pixar Chief Creative Officer Pete Docter, was going to be a "boutique film." He says, "They didn't see how big it was going to be." The SIGGRAPH community, however, wasn't surprised. It had watched step by step as Pixar developed the tools and talent to produce *Toy Story*. They had witnessed CG's evolution in the studio's Electronic Theater shorts like *Luxo Jr.* and *Tin Toy* and attended countless technical presentations.

"In this community there's a compounding of knowledge," says Catmull. "We published everything we did, and SIGGRAPH became our intellectual home. We were sharing ideas with each other. There wasn't any *one* breakthrough. It was building a body of ideas from many people. You build on what you've got, and if you do it right it can make a real difference."

SIGGRAPH 2025 may be opening with a reminder of how far the CG field has come since the introduction of Woody and Buzz Lightyear, but this year's Computer Animation Festival also offers a powerful glimpse of the future. Both the Best in Show Award and the Jury's Choice Award have been won by students. France's acclaimed school ESMA offers *Trash*, while ENSI delivers *Jour de vent*. When these two are considered along with *The Mooning* — the Best Student Film winner from Florida's Ringling College — it's clear there's a youth movement invigorating SIGGRAPH this year.

Festival Chair Dawn Fidrick uses the word "stellar" to describe the student work chosen for this year's Computer Animation



"The combination of art and science really captured the jury's attention. It takes real datasets and implements them in a visually compelling piece that educates us."

SIGGRAPH COMPUTER ANIMATION FESTIVAL
CHAIR DAWN FIDRICK ON *PERPETUAL OCEAN 2*

Festival. Pointing to the faux-documentary style of *The Mooning*, Fidrick notes: “It’s hard to do comedy, and when it looks natural, you know you’ve got something special. The jury really responded to it.”

Fidrick, whose “day job” includes working at Double Negative in Vancouver on films like *Dune 2*, chose jury members that reflect the breadth of CG today. They are: ILM’s Martine Bertrand, Nexus Studio’s Fx Goby, Netflix’s Melissa Tierney, Atomic Cartoons’ Alyssa Zarate and writer/producer Vikram Chandra. Fidrick, whose credits include producing *Signs of Life* for L.A.’s Griffith Observatory, made sure to pick jurors who were sophisticated in scientific visualization, choosing Dan Goods from NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory and Vivian Trakinski from the American Museum of Natural History.

A Tech Deep Dive

The result of the jury’s deliberations was 43 selections, chosen from 406 submissions. “Each film submitted was viewed at least three times by three different viewers before going to the jury,” Fidrick explains.

Once the final jury selections were in hand, Fidrick worked to develop a coherent program of screenings for both the Electronic Theater (nicknamed the “nighttime show”) and three Animation Theater afternoon programs. She organized them around the themes of “Light Roast,” “Medium Roast” and “Dark Roast.” “Those words suggest the tone or mood of the content,” she explains.

The Light Roast sessions will feature a blend of student and professional work, such as scientific visualization pieces from NASA and Harvard Medical. These pieces take viewers from the world inside a bacterial molecule to distant stars captured by the Hubble Space Telescope.

The shorts screened in the Medium Roast program will include student films, professional game cinematics and music videos. And true to SIGGRAPH’s tradition of showing projects that defy easy categorization, it is presenting Australian Andy Thomas’ *Visual Bird Sounds*, in which he animates “audio life-forms” from the Amazon. The Dark Roast program lineup, meanwhile, percolates with student films, reflecting the fearlessness of young artists tackling darker themes.

Fidrick emphasizes that these “lunchtime” screenings will take advantage of the latest presentation technology. “When our 2024 Chair John Kalagian brought back these



IN YOUR DREAMS

TOY STORY



VISUAL BIRD SONGS

FLINK'S PIGEON PROBLEMS

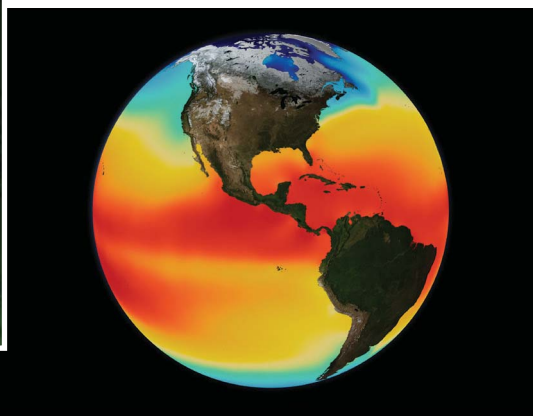




THE MOONING



DIABLO 4 VESSEL OF HATRED



NASA PERPETUAL OCEAN 2

Animation Theater screenings, they attracted packed houses. So, we're bringing them to a larger space this year — 960 seats — and we're using Christie digital cinema projectors. The Light, Medium and Dark Roast sessions will have the same spectacular presentation that the Electronic Theater gets."

When the lights dim at the E.T. shows, SIGGRAPH audiences will see a broad spectrum of what CG animation can achieve. Along with the prizewinning student works *Trash*, *Jour du vent* and *The Mooning*, E.T. presents the Netflix/Skydance short *Flink's Pigeon Problems* and DreamWorks' *Wednesdays With Gramps*. The show will also spotlight game cinematics by Budapest's Digid Pictures for *Armored Core* and Blizzard's cinematic trailer for *Diablo IV: Vessel of Hatred*.

SIGGRAPH has traditionally highlighted scientific visualization, and this year's piece from NASA is a stunning example. In *Perpetual Ocean 2*, particle system animation represents swirling ocean currents with an artistry reminiscent of Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night*. As Fidrick notes, "This combination of art and science really captured the jury's attention. It takes real datasets and implements them in a visually compelling piece that educates us."

Genre-defying experimental animation frequently stands out in the Electronic Theater show, and holding the torch this

year is *Corpus and the Wandering*, from Jo Roy and the National Film Board of Canada. Roy used an iPhone and crafted images 50,000 layers deep. "It didn't have a traditional narrative," says Fidrick. "We love it when SIGGRAPH shows us something we've never seen before."



Ed Catmull

Longtime SIGGRAPH attendees might notice that E.T. isn't the vehicle for studio compilation reels that it once was. At SIGGRAPH 2025, studios will instead promote their coolest images by doing deep-dive Production Sessions. Wētā FX will reveal how it achieved intense weather effects for *The*

Last of Us, and Image Engine will explore its simulations for *Dune: Prophecy*. Meanwhile, Metaphysic, which is pushing the AI envelope to 'de-age' actors, will share the approach it used for last year's Robert Zemeckis' film *Here*.

To foster a give-and-take with audiences in the Computer Animation Festival, Fidrick says there will be preshows that present artists "In Conversation." Director Alex Woo and his lead collaborators will offer a "first look" at the Netflix animated feature *In Your Dreams*. And fittingly, given SIGGRAPH 2025's Vancouver locale, the National Film Board of Canada's *Inkwo for When the Starving Return* will be discussed by director Amanda Strong. Fidrick describes Strong's Indigenous film as "stop motion with a lot of CG. I don't know if we'd call it 'invisible CG,' but we hope it will demystify how stop motion may be made."

Giving audiences a glimpse behind the curtain is one of the things that SIGGRAPH does best, and having filmmakers "In Conversation" as part of the Computer Animation Festival seems like an apt complement to the opening Q&A with Ed Catmull. "Who will take the kind of risks that he took," asks Dawn Fidrick. "Who will be the next visionary?" ■

For more info, visit siggraph.org.

Vermin Point of View

ESMA graduates Maxime Crançon and Matteo Durand discuss the making of their SIGGRAPH and BAFTA Student Prize-winning short, *Trash*.

When ESMA (France's École Spéciale de Mécanique et d'Electricité) students Maxime Crançon and Matteo Durand set out to make their graduation project in the summer of 2023, they decided to tell the story of a rat and a pigeon which are desperately fighting for crumbs. "We started building our own references and put a lot of ourselves and the moods we like in the movie," says Durand. "We quickly agreed as a group that we wanted to address the movie to a teen/adult audience mainly because it's what we consume ourselves, and we felt more in touch with this kind of storytelling."

Durand says their team of eight students, a composer and an intern had to think about the story in relation to the background and how believable it needed to be. "Generally the ideas came up pretty easily because we knew from the start what we wanted, and all the constraints helped us feed the story and find interesting ways to make it work," he notes.

The project which took about a year to finish, was made using a mix of Maya and Houdini for production, RenderMan for rendering and DaVinci and Nuke for post and compositing.

Crançon says he had a lot of fun in the pre-production stage, figuring out the characters and buildings and trying to think of the smallest detail that would make the story feel organic. "Animating the fights was also a lot of fun; I loved thinking of how I could make it more nervous and impactful," he says. "But in the end, starting to see the shots you worked on fully rendered and comped was the best. You see all the sweat, blood and tears you put into it. That's the real reward!"

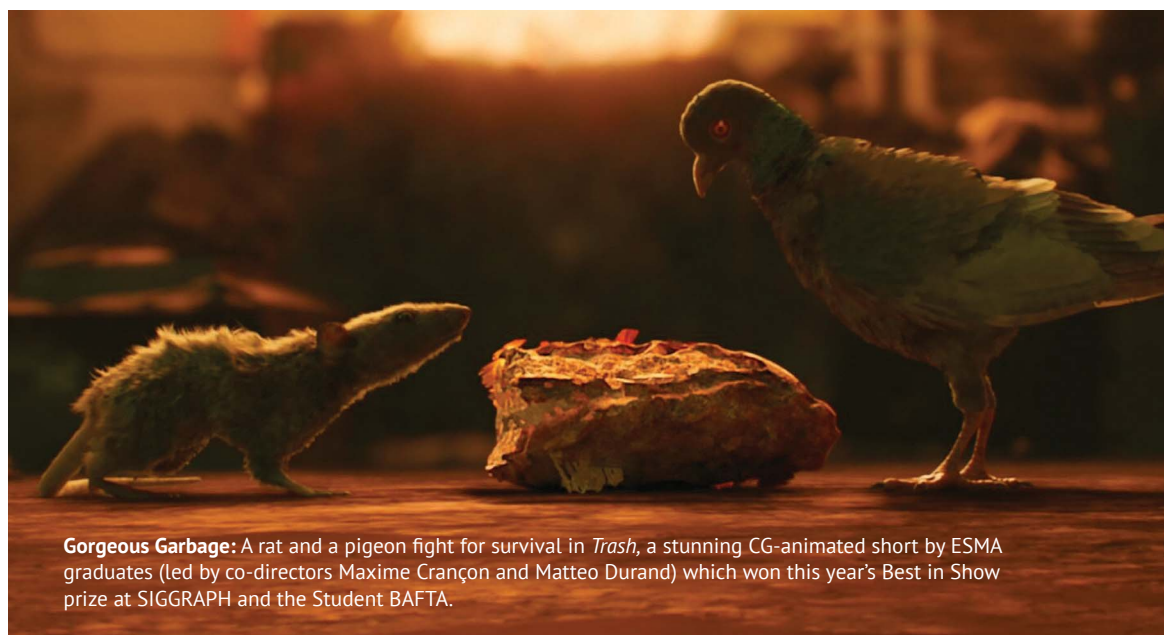
For Durand, imagining the story, the staging, and the overall art direction of the film was also quite rewarding. "Working on the cinematography was truly exciting — thinking

about the colors, responding to the intentions behind each scene, and so on," he says. "On a more technical level, designing the shaders and modeling was a lot of fun. Exploring how to break the often overly polished look of 3D was a particularly enjoyable and rewarding challenge."

The co-directors admit that the film's overall art direction provided to be the most challenging aspect of the project. "Optimizing

Both Durand and Crançon count 2D classics such as Satoshi Kon's *Tokyo Godfathers* and Michael Arias' *Tekkonkinkreet* as two of their biggest inspirations. "Many of our other shared references actually come from live-action cinema," they point out. "For example, movies like *Hereditary* and *Delicatessen* were key influences, especially in terms of cinematography, color grading and atmosphere."

When asked about the ultimate goal for



Gorgeous Garbage: A rat and a pigeon fight for survival in *Trash*, a stunning CG-animated short by ESMA graduates (led by co-directors Maxime Crançon and Matteo Durand) which won this year's Best in Show prize at SIGGRAPH and the Student BAFTA.

our scenes was a real puzzle," says Durand. "But in the end, those constraints actually helped shape our storytelling. They forced us to find creative, tailored solutions, and that's ultimately what allowed the story to take the form it has today."

The duo studied at ESMA for four years, with the last year focused entirely on the production of their graduation film, and one preparatory year. "We've been in the school and known each other for around five years," says Crançon. "The school gave us the structure and tools we needed to bring *Trash* to life, while letting us shape the project in our own way. We also had regular feedback from teachers and professionals, which helped us stay on track and grow as a team."

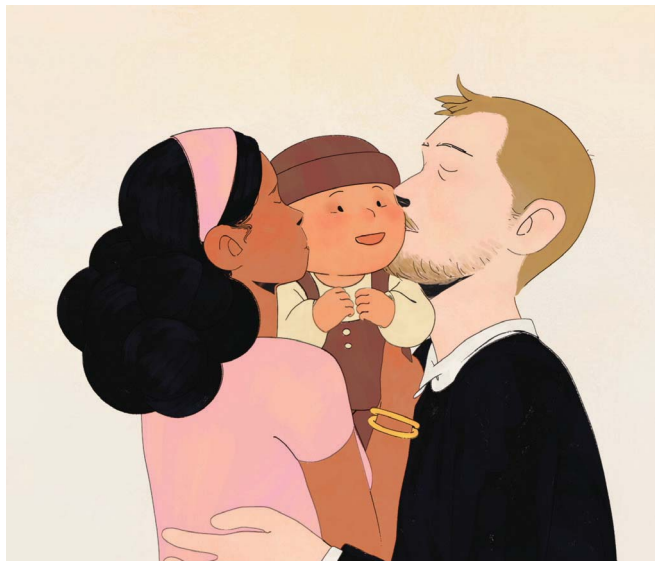
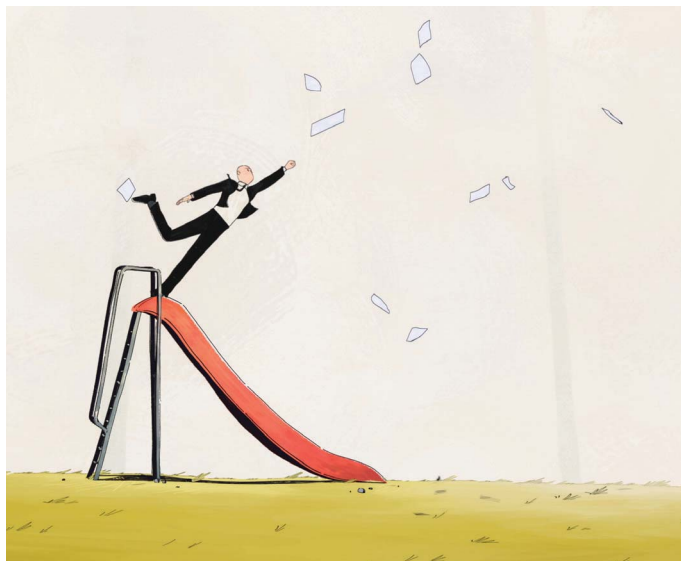
their short, the directors say they wanted to explore themes of survival, inequality and human excess through the lens of two animals fighting over scraps. "The rat and the pigeon, often seen as vermin, mirror the desperation and instinct we try to ignore in our own societies," comments Crançon. "Beneath the absurdity of their chase, there's a reflection of human behavior in the face of scarcity, neglect, and decay. That said, we also believe in letting go of full control over meaning. The film isn't a lecture, and we don't want it to be. It's open to interpretation, and we hope viewers can project their own thoughts, emotions, or even contradictions onto it!" ■

Find out more at [instagram.com/trash_esma](https://www.instagram.com/trash_esma).



Blowing in the Wind

The creators of SIGGRAPH 2025's Jury's Choice, *Jour de Vent (Windy Day)*, look back at their lovely student project.



This year's winner of the Jury's Choice Award at SIGGRAPH is *Jour de Vent (Windy Day)*, a worldless poetic short about various people encountering a very strong wind in the park. The project was a labor of love for **Martin Chailloux, Ai Kim Crespin, Élise Golfouse, Chloé Lab, Hugo Taillez** and **Camille Truding** — graduates of ENSI(École des Nouvelle Images) school in France. Here is what they told us about their lovely student project.

The idea behind the short: We made *Jour de Vent (Windy Day)* for our graduation movie, at our school ENSI in Avignon. The wind here is called 'The Mistral'; there were times when it was so powerful that it was impossible for us to walk straight. We wanted to know what would happen if people were carried away by the wind. The six of us wanted to make a poetic short with a stylized 3D render, so the movie grew into itself quite naturally.

The details: We knew we would be working together on this particular project in mid-July, and started working actively on it early September. The first three to four months were a lot of research, both for the story and the visuals. We then started the production, and we finished during the last days of May, after nine intense months. Interestingly

enough, the story kept changing until the last day: The final shot was decided only three days before the end.

The team and the tools: Overall, six people were working on it. We used Maya for modeling, rigging and animation, Substance Painter for the texturing, Guerilla Render for the shading, lighting and rendering, and Nuke for the compositing. We also used Photoshop and TVPaint to create 2D textures and animations, and Reaper for sound editing.

The fun parts: We just loved working together. It is our own project so we were able to tell anything with it, and it was wonderful to see it shape itself into something that resembled each of us. Seeing the finished version for the first time was amazing: We realized we really liked our short!

The not-so-fun parts: We had to find new ways to use the 3D software we knew about, because we used them to create 2D-looking pictures instead. We did not know how to achieve our visual goals, so we needed to invent new ways of working with them. We also had a lot of characters for our short production time. There was a moment where we thought the dog would not be included! Plus, it was a great puzzle to give the best

amount of screen time and importance to each character.

In a sense the most important character was the wind. We decided to not show it directly to keep its metaphorical aspect, but it also meant that everything else had to move along with an invisible wind: the grass, the trees, the clothes, the tiny and light-weight objects. That was very hard to achieve!

Animation heroes: We decided that we wanted the movie to look like a graphic novel, so most of our inspiration was from the comics world. The visual style took inspiration from the art of Bill Watterston's *Calvin & Hobbes* and Sempé. The mood of the story resembles Jiro Taniguchi's books, especially *The Walking Man*.

Ideal impact: We hope they love the movie as much as we do. We put a little bit of ourselves into each character, and we hope they can also find themselves in the movie. We hope that people who watch it again in a few years will understand the shot differently because they grew older. It might be the same for us! ■

For more info, visit mubi.com/en/us/films/jour-de-vent.



ON THE DIGITAL FX FAST TRACK



Visual effects supervisor Ryan Tudhope takes us behind the scenes of summer's racing blockbuster *F1: The Movie*.

By Trevor Hogg

Director Joseph Kosinski recently shifted gears from *Top Gun: Maverick*'s aerial acrobatics of F/A-18s to Apple Original Films' *F1: The Movie*'s high-octane asphalt feats without missing a beat. In the new summer release, Brad Pitt plays a wily veteran who teaches a rookie driver (played by Damson Idris) how to master machine and speedway as well as a few life lessons.

Despite the emphasis on capturing everything in camera, there were still 2,500 visual effects shots that had to be produced over a period of a year and a half by Framestore, ILM, Red VFX, Lola VFX and Metaphysic. As the film's VFX supervisor, Ryan Tudhope, recalls, "We sat down with [director] Joe and Claudio Miranda [cinematographer] and essentially framed up the shots that they wanted in Unreal Engine: We had match-mated a real lap that [driver] Lewis Hamilton had done around Silverstone, and could essentially hit play and look at all of the cameras we'd selected, and every position that they were in a virtual way, and get an approval for where

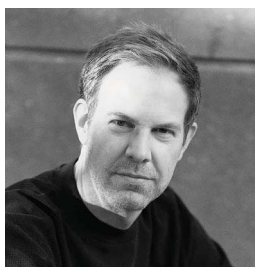
they should go. That's how we had confidence in Mercedes building all of those mounts, so they could go on the real car."

Tudhope points out that technology has further improved since making *Top Gun: Maverick*. "A critical upgrade was being able to see the footage as it was happening," he says. "On *Maverick*, we would hit record, the jets would go up, two hours later they would show up after running out of fuel, we would pop the cards in and see what we

were going around the track and doing the stunt work. We were also able to operate the cameras, which was another upgrade from the *Maverick* technology."

The Art of the Reskin

Reskinning Formula One cars was one of the major focuses of the visual effects work. "Both Joe and I believe that when you shoot for real and give the camera operator something to follow, you end up with



"Both the director and I believe that when you shoot for real and give the camera operator something to follow, you end up with a shot foundation that's more realistic rather than trying to invent all of it in the computer."

VFX SUPERVISOR RYAN TUDHOPE

got. But extensive radio frequencies were put around each track that we filmed at, and those frequencies fed the live footage from all of the cameras on multiple cars at the same time. We might be looking at eight or nine live HD feeds from these cars while they

a foundation of a shot that is much more realistic rather than trying to invent all of it in the computer," says Tudhope. "At the end of the film, when one of our heroes is battling with a Mercedes, we shot all of that with a picture car standing in as the Mercedes. Then



we digitally reskinned that other car to look like a Mercedes or Ferrari. That gave us the grounded reality we were after. There were cases where a stunt was too dangerous for us to put our car into, so we opted to do that with a much less expensive Formula Three car, which is quite a bit smaller; we would digitally reskin them to look like our Apex car.”

There was a whole other layer of reskinning made necessary by shooting during actual Formula One races. “It was determined early on that F1’s handle on filming races was much more thorough and figured out,” explains Tudhope. “We had an entire team setup within the F1 tents that took the uncompressed video feed from all of those cameras and recorded it. We put it down to 25 fps, played it back at 24 fps and added some motion blur to make it feel more cinematic. We had hundreds of hours of real race material that our editors could pick from to insert and combine with

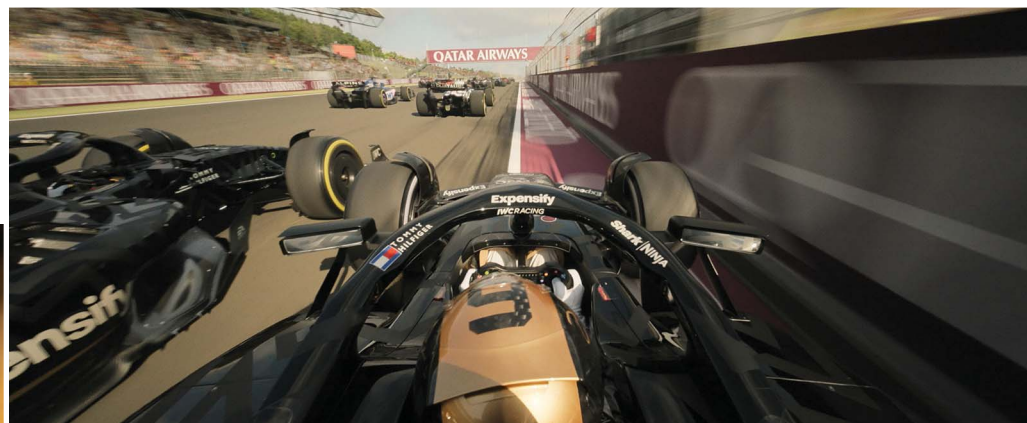
were going to be on during the race,” says Tudhope. “He knew that if in the story of Hungary, our cars needed to be towards the back [and] he would choose someone he felt was probably going to qualify towards the middle or back. We would put the cameras on those cars. That gave us an on-car view at a high quality in the real race, and we were then able to reskin the foreground cars to look [like] our car or change things. It became an effort of capturing all of the different pieces of footage that we could, knowing that we could digitally augment them later and make it all fit together.”

the original footage and put our car behind that. In the Abu Dhabi race at the end, it was a fun way to add some in-your-face energy during the highest stress moment of the film.”

Fantastic Flips

In the film, the Apex car flips over a race barrier and explodes in a spectacular crash. “That was a partnership with Keith Dawson, our special effects supervisor, who developed this incredible platform that shot cars down this ramp, and the rail tilted up at the end, launching the car, which went spinning and spinning,” reveals Tudhope. “Originally, we had

Driven to Success: VFX supe Ryan Tudhope and the teams at Framestore, ILM, Red VFX, Lola VFX and Metaphysic created over 2,500 shots to bring the exciting race scenes of *F1: The Movie* to cinematic life.



the stuff that we had shot with our production cameras. From a visual effects standpoint, that meant whatever was happening in the real race at that moment, we would at the very least swap out one of the cars for our Apex car. Oftentimes we reskinned the entire [car] and multiple cars in a particular shot because continuity became an important thing.”

Apple developed some amazing camera technology that was used on real Formula One cars for over-the-shoulder shots. “Joe was able to pick which cars those cameras

Sparks are a prominent atmospheric feature on the speedway. “The real F1 cars have a titanium on the underside, and if they come in after a race and too much of that has been scrapped away, they’ll be penalized,” says Tudhope. “It’s a way of keeping them honest in terms of their ride height and not getting the cars too low. When you see the cars sparking, that was something we either added as a way of being authentic to what was happening, or it might be in real footage. We would always preserve the sparks from

envisioned that the car would fly through the air, crash through a sign and crumble down there. The first time the car was launched, it landed before the sign, so they turned up the pressure in the rig as well as a couple of other things. The car ended up way beyond the sign and in the trees.”

He adds, “That was something even better than what we expected. We had cameras all over it, which were digitally removed, replaced the floor of the car and augmented the explosion. That entire corner was filmed at Brands Hatch in the U.K., which is a legendary racetrack doubling for Parabolica at Monza in Italy. There was a whole other batch of work to make it feel like it was in Italy and adding a grandstand. The rain that comes midrace was also something that wasn’t there. It was digital wet downs and rain to give the cars that sense of danger and slipperiness out there.”

Tudhope believes there is never one path to follow creatively and technically: “My favorite way to deliver visual effects is with a variety of techniques so the audience doesn’t have enough time to figure it out.” ■

Warner Bros. released *F1* in theaters worldwide on June 27.



Tech Reviews

By Todd Sheridan Perry

DaVinci Resolve 20



selection is now a point rather than a spline, which helps reduce errors due to changing shapes or things that go offscreen, and there are paint tools for adding and removing parts of the mask when the AI isn't AI-ing as well. The AI Depth Map has also been beefed up to make more accurate calculations for determining the depth of objects in the scene. And there is a pretty fantastic Color Warper tool, which provides a more intuitive method for shifting colors than traditional color wheels where you use a chromaticity

Blackmagic has officially released DaVinci Resolve 20, and the list of additions and augmentations is huge. Since I'll never be able to cover everything, I recommend you visit the official website to get the entire list later.

The Cut and Edit pages have a handful of new (or better) AI tools to help with those tasks that are time-consuming to do manually but must be done first to get to the creative stuff. One example is the AI Intelliscript function, which is super handy for interview shoots where you need to transcribe dialogue to text. You can bring it back into AI Intelliscript, layer in your different cameras, and Resolve will do a rough assemble edit based on who is talking. Further, there are some AI audio tools, like the AI Dialogue Matcher, which can balance the tone, level and reverb between dialogue that may have been recorded in different locales with different mics and such. And AI Voice Convert can change one voice to

another — it has default voices, but you can train new voices if you have enough material to train with — and permission. The AI Music Editor can extend music by finding appropriate transition points. Meanwhile, AI Detect Music autodetects the beats and can display the beats on the timeline and snap to those beats — which is great for music videos, promo spots and demo reels.

Moving over to the Fusion page, there is robust support for Deep Compositing and native support for Cryptomattes. Layered files like PSD and multichannel EXRs can be broken out into those layers (which is also supported in the Edit page). Vector warping is available for optical-flow-type tracking onto deforming surfaces. And one small addition, which I think is really important, is that you can view your comp through the grade that has been applied in the Color page.

Speaking of the Color page, the AI Magic Mask has been updated so that the mask

diagram to see which color in the spectrum you are coming from (sampled with an eyedropper in your picture) and then dragging a spline to the color you want it to become. It comes with parameters to refine the spread of the effect — meaning how broad your change reaches across the hue spectrum.

Fairlight has its own set of AI tools, which include an AI Audio Assistant that can build an initial sound mix for you, not only balancing different tracks but organizing those tracks. And AI Intellicut can remove silences, checkerboard speakers and set up ADR cues. You can also preset chains of FX that you frequently apply to sound clips.

I'm pretty sure this covers only 15% of the additions and changes in Resolve 20, but I wanted to add one more — support for Apple ProRes on Windows. Finally! ■

Website: blackmagicdesign.com/products/davinciresolve
Price: \$295 (lifetime license)



Todd Sheridan Perry is an award-winning VFX supervisor and digital artist whose recent credits include *I'm a Virgo*, *For All Mankind* and *Black Panther*. He can be reached at todd@teaspoonvfx.com.

Software reviews were written after being tested on a Puget Workstation AMD Ryzen Threadripper PRO 7975WX 4.0GHz 32 Core 350W: 128GB DDR5-5600 RAM and NVIDIA RTX 6000 Ada Ge 48GB PCI-E. (pugetsystems.com)



Maya Motion Maker



Character animation, especially locomotion (running, walking, etc.), is really time-consuming and requires a certain set of skills — i.e., it's hard. There are plenty of motion-capture libraries to tap into to get you on your way. And even though you can layer keyframe animation on top of it, you are locked into those kinds of motions, unless you have an Xsens suit or motion-capture system — but at that point, you are working on another level than many of us.

To answer this need, Autodesk has been developing a locomotion system called Motion Maker, which is a machine-learning-based motion system that has been trained on hours of motion data captured at its studio. It's controlled by a motion path that you lay down with traditional keyframes, and based on that path, Motion Maker calculates the gait of the character, including speedups, slowdowns and turns, moving up and down terrain (to an extent). And you can even add jumps (more cue-based actions are in the works).

It is currently limited to a man, a woman and a dog (which is kind of cool and unique). But you can take the base animated character and retarget the generated animation onto your own biped character. Presumably you can do it with the dog too, but I'm guessing the biped retargeting tools are more ubiquitous. Plus, the generated data is treated as regular animation data and it's on a character rig, so you can layer animation on top, blend between keyframed animation and Motion Maker animation, and blend with other

motion-capture clips. For example, jumping from a high wall and landing (motion-capture clip) and then running down the alley (Motion Maker). Furthermore, it works with Live Link — so you can port the motion over to Unreal Engine.

There are other tools to finesse the animation like speed ramping, adjusting the scale of the motion, tweaking the orientation of the movement (like turning sideways rather than walking straight down the path) and some tools for finessing foot-slides.

It's a cool idea, and in its current state, I can see it being really useful for quickly blocking out ideas for animation and previz. Think of it like a sketch, so a director can sign off on timing and blocking before it's passed over to the animation team. This might sound like a slight, but it's not. You should realize that we are in the very early stages of this tool — a newborn compared to the far more mature host that is Maya. The development team has decided to include it in the latest build of Maya 2026 so it can get feedback from the animation community to make it a more robust production tool. There are plans for more kinds of motion, more complex motion, facial motion capture and the ability to train with your own motion-capture data. I do see some promising uses in the future for Motion Maker. ■

Website: help.autodesk.com/view/MAYAUL/2026/ENU/

Price: Autodesk Maya is \$245 monthly or \$1,946 annually

United States Postal Service

Statement of Ownership,
Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title: Animation Magazine
2. Publication Number: 1041-617X
3. Filing Date: 12/31/24
4. Issue Frequency: Published Monthly except for combined issues of Jun/Jul and Sep/Oct
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 10
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$60
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 26500 W. Agoura Rd. Ste. 102-651, Calabasas, CA 91302, Contact Person: Jan Bayouth 818-883-2884
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: (same)
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher (Name and Complete Mailing Address): Jean Thoren 24943 Kit Carson Rd. Hidden Hills, CA 91302. Editor (Name and Complete Mailing Address): Ramin Zahed 26500 W. Agoura Rd. Ste. 102-651, Calabasas, CA 91302
10. Owner: Jean Thoren (same)
11. Known Bond Holders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders: none
12. Tax Status - The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: X Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
13. Publication Title: Animation Magazine
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Jul/Aug
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation, (Total Number of Copies - Average # of Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months and No. Copies of Single Issue Published nearest to Filing Date): b) Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail) - (1) Mailed Outside-County - Paid Subs - 948, 950 (2) Mailed In-County Paid Subs - 2409, 2254 (3) Paid Dist. Outside - 5, 5 (4) Paid Dist. by Other - 20, 20; c) Total Paid Dist. 3382, 3279; d) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution - 2202, 1600; e) Total Free or Nominal Rate Dist. - 2202, 1600; f) Total Dist. - 5584, 3879; g) Copies not Distributed - 244, 285; h) Total - 5828, 4164; i) Percent Paid - 61%, 59%
16. Electronic Copy Circulation (Average # of Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months and No. Copies of Single Issue Published nearest to Filing Date): a) Paid Electronic Copies - 8202, 8610; b) Total Paid Print Copies + Paid Electronic - 11584, 11889; c) Total Print Distribution - 13786, 12489; d) Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) - 84%, 96%; X - I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies are paid above a nominal price.
17. Publication of Statement of Ownership Will be Printed in the August Issue of this Publication. Jan Bayouth 4/21/25

THE LOS ANGELES FILM SCHOOL®

CREATE YOUR FUTURE IN ANIMATION

Learn Visual Effects, Rigging, Character Animation & 3D Modeling and more! Take your skills to the next level at The Los Angeles Film School - on campus in Hollywood or 100% online.

START YOUR JOURNEY NOW
WWW.LAFILM.EDU



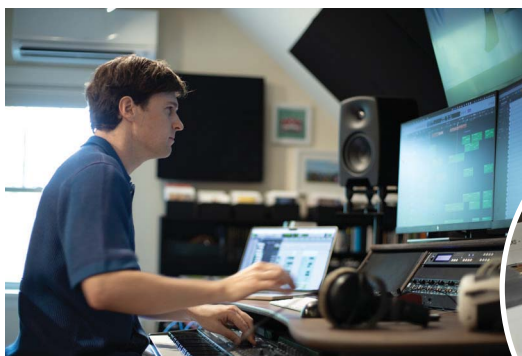
Important information about the educational debt, earnings, and completion rates of students who attended this school can be found at: lafilm.edu.

© 2025 The Los Angeles Film School. All rights reserved. The term "The Los Angeles Film School" and The Los Angeles Film School logo are either service marks or registered service marks of The Los Angeles Film School. Accredited College, ACCSC. VA7 approved by CSAAVE 6/25



A DAY IN THE LIFE

This month, we pay a visit to **Joshua Moshier**, the talented composer of the popular feature, *The Day the Earth Blew Up: A Looney Tunes Movie*.



1. I'm setting up for today's work. Once this cue is approved, the mock-up will become a printed score that the orchestra will perform.

2. I like to warm up my ears by listening to something genius and inspiring: Today it's *Cinema Paradiso* by the great Ennio Morricone.



3. Early in the process I often work with animatics and rough animation, but today I'm writing to footage that is close to final.



4. Time for a Zoom chat with director and animator **Celia Bullwinkel**. I loved scoring her film *Sidewalk*.



5. I try to carve out time to develop ideas at the piano, away from the picture.



6. Today I'm recording my accordion. Moving air through the bellows gives the music a feeling of shape and breath.



7. One of the best parts of scoring a film is collaborating with my teammates —music mixer **Frank Wolf**, music editor **Joe Corcoran**, Pro Tools Operator **Colby Donaldson**, orchestrator **Dan Brown**, and of course our wonderful orchestra, put together by **Peter Rotter**.



8. Director **Pete Browngardt** and lead voice actor **Eric Bauza** were at the recording session and cheered on the players.

PRINT OR DIGITAL NEVER MISS AN ISSUE!



ANIMATIONMAGAZINE.NET/SUBSCRIBE

STORYBOARD²⁵ PRO



Quick Thumbnailing Workflow

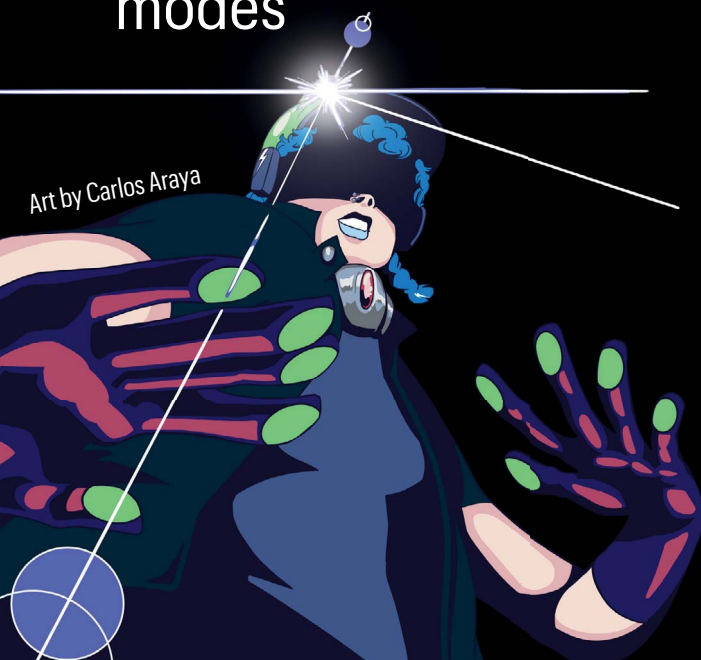
Draw your thumbnails in distraction-free interface, or print out and scan a grid

Enhanced Effect Stack View

Adjust and keyframe a wide range of layer transformations and effects

Non-Destructive Layer Effects

Explore blurs, contrast adjustments and blending modes



Add On

Toon Boom
Ember

Ember is a suite of AI-powered tools designed to enhance creative workflows in Storyboard Pro and Harmony so artists can work with **fewer interruptions, iterate faster**, and **focus on the creative process**.

Download a 21 day trial at toonboom.com/storyboard-pro *